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7th plenary meeting

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Official Records

President: The Hon. Julian R. Hunte (Saint Lucia)

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Address by the President

The President: This general debate of the fifty-eighth session of the General Assembly takes place at a time of enormous challenges for the United Nations. The participation of a significant number of heads of State and Government in the debate sends a strong message of support for the United Nations and reaffirms to the people of the world that their leaders are at the forefront of international efforts to address the broad range of issues of importance to them. As President of the fifty-eighth session, the presence of world leaders here is encouraging to me.

Some 58 years on, recent unfolding, and often tragic, developments worldwide pose a serious challenge for the United Nations, and particularly for the General Assembly. That is particularly so in the areas enshrined in the Charter as the Organization's primary objectives: the promotion of economic and social advancement, tolerance and peace and the maintenance of international peace and security, including collective security. Lately, we have engaged in a process of self-searching and re-examination, looking, for example, at the goals we have set for ourselves in the economic and social fields and at our efforts to keep peace in the world. Reform and revitalization of our Organization is key to the success of our initiatives, and thus is among the issues we are reviewing.

The safety and security of United Nations personnel has high priority, and has taken on renewed urgency following yet another attack on the United Nations in Baghdad. As we express our sympathy over yet more loss of life and injury, I wish to assure the Secretary-General of our continuing support for his efforts to protect United Nations staff.

Our achievements over the past decade are unquestionable, but many of our initiatives are useful only if they lead to concrete action. We the Member States of the General Assembly are partners, and must work cooperatively to ensure that urgent and necessary action is taken to implement those initiatives, if we are to remain relevant. In doing so, I believe it to be in our best interests to be consistent in our respect for the Charter and for international law, to demonstrate by our action that the General Assembly has not only the capacity but also the political will to constructively address and resolve the complex problems of the world and to close the gap between our agreed objectives and the resources needed to implement them.

The General Assembly has oversight of the United Nations system as a whole, and hence has before it the full range of international issues. As advocate, supervisor and policy-making body, it must give the direction necessary to ensure coherence in the system, so that the Organization may respond in a holistic manner to the many challenges it faces. Heads of State and Government must bring new dynamism to the General Assembly during this session. The political direction that they will provide will be key to enabling

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the Assembly effectively to address critical issues such as sustainable development, poverty alleviation, violation of human rights and fundamental freedoms, terrorism, and United Nations reform. This is the direction we need for the entire year of this session, including from January to September 2004, for it is during this less intensive second part of the session, so to speak, that we can look more reflectively at the decisions we have taken in the fall and begin the critical task of implementation and other aspects of the Assembly's work.

We all know the problems. I will be looking to heads of State and Government and to other high-level participants in this general debate for their advice on how best we may arrive at the solutions.

In accordance with the decision taken at its 2nd plenary meeting, on 19 September 2003, the General Assembly will hear a presentation by the Secretary-General of his annual report on the work of the Organization under agenda item 10 of the provisional agenda.

I give the floor to the Secretary-General.

The Secretary-General (*spoke in French*): The last 12 months have been very painful for those of us who believe in collective answers to our common problems and challenges.

In many countries, terrorism has once again brought death and suffering to innocent people. In the Middle East, and in certain parts of Africa, violence has continued to escalate. On the Korean peninsula and elsewhere, the threat of nuclear proliferation casts an ominous shadow across the landscape. And barely one month ago, in Baghdad, the United Nations itself suffered a brutal and deliberate assault, in which the international community lost some of its most talented servants. Yesterday the United Nations was again attacked, and it was only because of prompt action by the Iraqi police that another major disaster was averted. Unfortunately, an Iraqi policeman lost his life.

On this occasion, I wish to convey my most sincere condolences to the family of that brave police officer. But I am thinking also of the 19 people, including local United Nations staff, who were injured in the attack. I wish them all a swift recovery, and I hope that all those who have been injured or were killed in the war — soldiers and innocent civilians — will remain in our prayers.

In this context, I deplore — as all present here do as well, I am sure — the brutal attack that nearly killed Ms. Akila al-Hashemi, a member of the Governing Council. I pray, too, for her swift recovery.

(*spoke in English*)

Excellencies, the United Nations is you. You are the United Nations. The staff who were killed or injured in the attack on our Baghdad headquarters were your staff. You had given them a mandate to assist the suffering Iraqi people and to help them recover their sovereignty.

In future — not only in Iraq but wherever the United Nations is engaged — we must take more effective measures to protect the security of our staff. I count on your full support — legal, political and financial.

Meanwhile, let me reaffirm the great importance I attach to a successful outcome in Iraq. Whatever view each of us may take of the events of recent months, it is vital for all of us that the outcome be a stable and democratic Iraq, at peace with itself and with its neighbours, and contributing to stability in the region.

Subject to satisfactory security considerations, the United Nations system is prepared to play its full role in working for a satisfactory outcome in Iraq, and to do so as part of an international effort — an effort by the whole international community — pulling together on the basis of a sound and viable policy. If it takes extra time and patience to forge a policy that is collective, coherent and workable, then I, for one, would regard that time as well spent. Indeed, this is how we must approach all the many pressing crises that confront us today.

Three years ago, when you came here for the Millennium Summit, we shared a vision of global solidarity and security, expressed in the Millennium Declaration. But recent events have called that consensus into question.

All of us know that there are new threats that must be faced — or, perhaps, old threats in new and dangerous combinations: new forms of terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

But while some consider these threats as self-evidently the main challenge to world peace and security, others feel more immediately menaced by small arms employed in civil conflict, or by so-called

"soft threats" such as the persistence of extreme poverty, the disparity of income between and within societies, the spread of infectious diseases, or climate change and environmental degradation.

In truth, we do not have to choose. The United Nations must confront all these threats and challenges — new and old, "hard" and "soft". It must be fully engaged in the struggle for development and for poverty eradication, starting with the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals; in the joint struggle to protect our common environment; and in the struggle for human rights, democracy and good governance.

In fact, all these struggles are linked. We now see, with chilling clarity, that a world in which many millions of people endure brutal oppression and extreme misery will never be fully secure, even for its most privileged inhabitants.

Yet the "hard" threats, such as terrorism and weapons of mass destruction, are real and cannot be ignored. Terrorism is not a problem only for rich countries. Ask the people of Bali, Bombay, Nairobi or Casablanca. Weapons of mass destruction do not threaten only the western or northern world. Ask the people of Iran, or of Halabja, in Iraq.

Where we disagree, it seems, is on how to respond to these threats. Since this Organization was founded, States have generally sought to deal with threats to the peace through containment and deterrence, by a system based on collective security and on the United Nations Charter. Article 51 of the Charter prescribes that all States, if attacked, retain the inherent right of self-defence. But until now it has been understood that when States go beyond that and decide to use force to deal with broader threats to international peace and security, they need the unique legitimacy provided by the United Nations.

Now, some say this understanding is no longer tenable, since an armed attack with weapons of mass destruction could be launched at any time, without warning, or by a clandestine group. Rather than wait for that to happen, they argue, States have the right and obligation to use force pre-emptively, even on the territory of other States, and even while the weapons systems that might be used to attack them are still being developed. According to this argument, States are not obliged to wait until there is agreement in the

Security Council. Instead, they reserve the right to act unilaterally, or in ad hoc coalitions.

This logic represents a fundamental challenge to the principles on which, however imperfectly, world peace and stability have rested for the last fifty-eight years. My concern is that, if it were to be adopted, it would set precedents that resulted in a proliferation of the unilateral and lawless use of force, with or without justification.

But it is not enough to denounce unilateralism, unless we also face up squarely to the concerns that make some States feel uniquely vulnerable, since it is those concerns that drive them to take unilateral action. We must show that those concerns can, and will, be addressed effectively through collective action.

We have come to a fork in the road. This may be a moment no less decisive than in 1945 itself, when the United Nations was founded. At that time, a group of far-sighted leaders, led and inspired by President Franklin D. Roosevelt, were determined to make the second half of the twentieth century different from the first half. They saw that the human race had only one world to live in, and that unless it managed its affairs prudently, all human beings might perish. So they drew up rules to govern international behaviour and founded a network of institutions, with the United Nations at its centre, in which the peoples of the world could work together for the common good.

Now we must decide whether it is possible to continue on the basis agreed then, or whether radical changes are needed. And we must not shy away from questions about the adequacy and effectiveness of the rules and instruments at our disposal.

Among those instruments, none is more important than the Security Council itself. In my recent report on the implementation of the Millennium Declaration, I drew attention to the urgent need for the Council to regain the confidence of States and of world public opinion — both by demonstrating its ability to deal effectively with the most difficult issues and by becoming more broadly representative of the international community as a whole as well as the geopolitical realities of today.

The Council needs to consider how it will deal with the possibility that individual States may use force pre-emptively against perceived threats. Its members may need to begin a discussion on the criteria for an

early authorization of coercive measures to address certain types of threats — for instance, terrorist groups armed with weapons of mass destruction. And they still need to engage in serious discussion of the best way to respond to threats of genocide or other comparable massive violations of human rights — an issue which I raised myself from this podium in 1999. Once again, this year, our collective response to events of this type — in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and in Liberia — has been hesitant and tardy.

As for the composition of the Council, which has been on the agenda of the Assembly for over a decade, virtually all Member States agree that the Council should be enlarged, but there is no agreement on the details.

I respectfully suggest to you, Excellencies, that in the eyes of your peoples the difficulty of reaching agreement does not excuse your failure to do so. If you want the Council and the Council's decisions to command greater respect, particularly in the developing world, you need to address the issue of its composition with greater urgency.

But the Security Council is not the only institution that needs strengthening. As you know, I am doing my best to make the Secretariat more effective, and I look to this Assembly to support my efforts. Indeed, in my report I also suggested that this Assembly itself needs to be strengthened, and that the role of the Economic and Social Council — and the role of the United Nations as a whole in economic and social affairs, including its relationship to the Bretton Woods institutions — needs to be rethought and reinvigorated. I even suggested that the role of the Trusteeship Council could be reviewed, in the light of new kinds of responsibility that you have given to the United Nations in recent years.

In short, I believe the time is ripe for a hard look at fundamental policy issues and at the structural changes that may be needed in order to strengthen them. History is a harsh judge: it will not forgive us if we let this moment pass.

For my part, I intend to establish a high-level panel of eminent personalities to which I will assign four tasks: first, to examine current challenges to peace and security; second, to consider the contribution which collective action can make in addressing these challenges; third, to review the functioning of major organs of the United Nations and the relationship

between them; and fourth, to recommend ways of strengthening the United Nations, through reform of its institutions and processes. The panel will focus primarily on threats to peace and security. But it will also need to examine other global challenges, insofar as these may influence or connect with those threats.

I will ask the panel to report back to me before the beginning of the next session of the General Assembly so that I can make recommendations to you at that session. But only you can take the firm and clear decisions that will be needed. Those decisions might include far-reaching institutional reforms. Indeed, I hope they will.

But institutional reforms alone will not suffice. Even the most perfect instrument will fail, unless people put it to good use.

The United Nations is by no means a perfect instrument, but it is a precious one. I urge you to seek agreement on ways of improving it, but above all of using it as its founders intended: to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, to re-establish the basic conditions for justice and the rule of law, and to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom.

The world may have changed, but those aims are as valid and urgent as ever. We must keep them firmly in our sights.

The President: I thank the Secretary-General for his presentation.

Agenda item 9

General debate

The President: Before giving the floor to the first speaker for this morning, I should like to remind members that the list of speakers was created on the basis that statements will have a time limit of up to 15 minutes per statement. In the light of that given time frame, I should like to appeal to speakers to deliver their statements at a normal speed so that interpretation may be provided properly.

I also should like to draw the General Assembly's attention to the decision taken by the Assembly at previous sessions, namely, that the practice of expressing congratulations inside the General

Assembly Hall after a speech has been delivered is strongly discouraged.

In that connection, I should like to suggest that speakers in the general debate, after delivering their statements, should leave the General Assembly Hall through room GA-200, located behind the podium, before returning to their seats.

May I take it that the General Assembly agrees to proceed in the same manner during the general debate of the fifty-eighth session?

It was so decided.

Address by Mr. Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, President of the Federative Republic of Brazil

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Federative Republic of Brazil.

Mr. Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, President of the Federative Republic of Brazil, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, President of the Federative Republic of Brazil, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Da Silva (*spoke in Portuguese; English text provided by the delegation*): Let my first words before this world parliament be of confidence in the human capacity to overcome challenges and to move towards higher forms of partnership, both within and among nations. On behalf of the Brazilian people, I reaffirm our belief in the United Nations. Its role in promoting peace and social justice remains irreplaceable.

I pay tribute to Secretary-General Kofi Annan for the leadership that he has shown in defence of a world united through respect for international law and solidarity among nations.

The Assembly convenes under the impact of the brutal attack on the United Nations Mission in Baghdad, which took the life of its head officer, the High Commissioner for Human Rights, our compatriot Sergio Vieira de Mello. Sergio's renowned competence was nurtured by the only weapons in which he believed: dialogue, persuasion and, above all, concern for those who are most vulnerable. On behalf of the

United Nations, he showed a tolerant, peace-loving and courageous humanism that mirrors Brazil's libertarian soul. Sergio's sacrifice, and that of his colleagues, must not be in vain. We can best honour his memory by redoubling our efforts to protect human dignity wherever it is threatened.

I warmly greet Mr. Julian Hunte, who was elected President of the Assembly at a particularly grave moment in the history of the United Nations. The international community faces enormous political, economic and social challenges requiring an accelerated pace of reform. Only thus will our collective decisions and actions be truly respected and effective.

In my nine months as President of Brazil, I have conferred with leaders of all continents, and I have sensed in them a deep concern to defend and strengthen multilateral institutions. The improvement of the multilateral system is a necessary counterpart to democratic practice within nations. Every nation that practices democracy must strive to ensure that in international affairs, decision-making is equally open, transparent, legitimate and representative. The tragedies that have befallen Iraq and the Middle East can be overcome only within a multilateral framework — one in which the United Nations is given a central role.

In Iraq, the prevailing climate of insecurity and growing tension makes national reconstruction an even more complex task. That impasse can be overcome only under the leadership of the United Nations — leadership not only in re-establishing acceptable security conditions, but also in guiding the political process towards the restoration of Iraqi sovereignty as soon as possible. We must not shy away from our collective responsibilities. A war can perhaps be won single-handedly, but peace — lasting peace — cannot be secured without the support of all.

Two years later, the images of the barbaric attack on 11 September still haunt us. There is a commendable willingness today to adopt more effective measures to deal with terrorism, with weapons of mass destruction and with organized crime. Unfortunately, there are also worrisome signs of an attempt to discredit the Organization and even to divest the United Nations of its political authority. Let there be no ambiguity on this subject: no matter how invaluable its humanitarian work, the United Nations

was conceived to do more than simply to clear away the rubble of conflicts that it was unable to prevent. Our central task is to preserve people from the scourge of war, to negotiate settlements inspired by the principles and objectives of the San Francisco Charter. Let us not place greater trust on military might than on the institutions we created with the light of reason and the vision of history.

Reform of the United Nations has become an urgent task, given the present risks to the international political order.

The Security Council must be fully empowered to deal with crises and threats to peace. It must therefore be equipped with the tools for effective action. Above all, its decisions must be seen as legitimate by the community of nations as a whole. Its composition, in particular as concerns permanent membership, cannot remain unaltered almost 60 years later. It can no longer ignore the changing world. More specifically, it must take into account the emergence on the international scene of developing countries. They have become important actors that often exercise a critical role in ensuring the pacific settlement of disputes.

Brazil believes that it has a useful contribution to make. It seeks not to advance an exclusive conception of international security, but rather to give expression to the perceptions and aspirations of a region that today is a hallmark of peaceful coexistence among its members and that is a force for international stability. Given the support we received in South America and beyond, Brazil is encouraged to continue advocating for a Security Council that better reflects contemporary reality.

We also favour an Economic and Social Council capable of bringing about a fair and just economic order. It is crucial that the Economic and Social Council regain the role bestowed upon it by the founding fathers of the Organization. We wish to see the Economic and Social Council cooperate actively with the Security Council in preventing conflicts and in nation building.

The General Assembly, in turn, must be strengthened politically so as to focus on priority issues and avoid duplication of effort. The General Assembly has fulfilled a historically important role by convening major conferences and other meetings on human rights, the environment, population, women's rights, racial discrimination, AIDS and social development.

However, the General Assembly should not hesitate to assume its responsibilities for maintaining international peace and security. Our Organization has shown that there are legal and political alternatives to a veto-induced paralysis and to actions lacking multilateral endorsement.

Peace, security, development and social justice are indivisible. Brazil has endeavoured to practice with utmost consistency the principles for which it stands. The new relationship we are forging with our South American neighbours is founded on mutual respect, friendship and cooperation.

We are moving beyond our shared history and geography to create a unique sense of kinship and partnership. In this context, our relationship with Argentina remains crucial.

South America and Latin America are increasingly seen as a region of peace, democracy and development that aspires to become a new outpost for growth in a stagnating world economy.

We are deepening the already significant ties with traditional partners in North America and Europe, but we also seek to widen and diversify our international presence. Our relations with China and the Russian Federation have revealed unexpected complementarities.

We are proud to be the country with the second largest population of African descent in the world. In November, I will be travelling to five countries in Southern Africa to foster economic, political, social and cultural cooperation. With the same goal in mind, we will also host a summit meeting between South American countries and the member States of the League of Arab States. With India and South Africa we have established a trilateral forum for political consultations and joint projects.

The protectionism practised by rich countries unfairly penalizes efficient producers in developing countries. Today this is the greatest obstacle to launching a new era of economic and social progress. Brazil and its partners in the G-22 maintained during the World Trade Organization summit meeting at Cancun that the crucial goal of effectively opening markets is achievable through pragmatic and mutually reinforcing negotiations that bring about an effective opening of markets. I reaffirm our willingness to travel along a path that converges towards solutions that

benefit all countries, taking into account the interests of developing countries.

We are entirely in favour of free trade as long as we can all compete on a level playing field. Liberalization should not require countries to abandon the prerogative of formulating industrial, technological, social and environmental policy. In Brazil we are engaged in setting up a new framework that balances economic stability and social inclusion. From that standpoint, trade negotiations are not an end in themselves, but rather a means to foster development and overcome poverty. International trade should be a tool not only for creating wealth, but also for its distribution.

I reaffirm before this truly universal Assembly the appeal I launched at the Davos and Porto Alegre forums and at the Enlarged Summit of the G-8 at Evian. We must wage — both politically and materially — the only war from which we will all emerge victorious: the war against hunger and extreme poverty.

The eradication of hunger in the world is a moral and political imperative. And we all know that it is possible. What is truly required is political will.

I do not wish to dwell on indications of barbarism. I would rather acknowledge ethical and social progress, no matter how modest. Yet we cannot dismiss the statistics that expose the terrible scourge of extreme poverty and hunger in the world. Hunger today touches a fourth of the world's population, including 300 million children. Daily, 24,000 people fall victim to malnutrition-related diseases.

Nothing is more absurd or intolerable than the pervasiveness of hunger in the twenty-first century, this golden age of science and technology.

With each passing day, human intelligence enlarges the horizons of the possible and achieves prodigious feats. Yet, hunger persists and, what is worse, it is spreading throughout various regions of the planet.

The more we seem to approach the divine through our creative abilities, the more humanity betrays its aspirations through our inability to respect and protect our fellow creatures. The more we celebrate God by generating riches, the more we hurt our ideals by not minimally sharing them.

What is the use of all our science and technology, of all the abundance and luxury that it has generated, if we do not put it to use, guaranteeing the most sacred of rights: the right to life?

I recall the penetrating warning, made by Pope Paul VI 36 years ago, but which is still surprisingly relevant: "The starving people of the world dramatically address their plea to the wealthy".

Hunger is an emergency, and it should be dealt with as such. The eradication of hunger is a civilizational challenge that requires that we seek a shortcut to the future. Will we act to eliminate hunger or will we forsake our credibility through omission? We no longer have the right to allege that we were not home when they knocked at our door asking for solidarity. We have no right to say to the famished who have waited for so long: come back next century. The true path to peace is to fight hunger and extreme poverty to the end, in a campaign of solidarity that unites the planet rather than deepening the divisions and the hatred that inflame people and sow terror.

Despite the failure of systems that favour the generation of wealth without reducing extreme poverty, many people still persist in their short-sightedness and greed.

Since my inauguration as President of Brazil on 1 January, significant progress has been made on the economic front. Stability is back and the groundwork for a renewed cycle of sustained growth has been laid. We will continue to work hard to balance public accounts and to reduce external vulnerability. We will spare no effort to increase exports, raise the savings rate, attract foreign investment and start growing again.

Yet at the same time we must strive to cope with the need for food, jobs, education and health services for millions of Brazilians living below the poverty line. We are committed to bringing about major social reform in the country.

Hunger is the most dramatic and urgent expression of a structural imbalance requiring correction through integrated policies that foster full citizenship. That is why I launched the "zero hunger" programme in Brazil. It seeks to eradicate hunger and its root causes in the shortest possible time by promoting major solidarity and wide-ranging programmes bringing together Government, civil society and the private sector. The results of those

emergency and structural measures are already benefiting 4 million individuals who were previously denied the right to a daily meal. The goal of this programme is to guarantee that no Brazilians will go hungry.

The United Nations adopted the highly acclaimed Millennium Development Goals. The Food and Agriculture Organization has at its disposal outstanding technical and social expertise. But we need to make a qualitative leap in the global endeavour to fight hunger. That is why I proposed setting up a global fund to fight hunger and suggested means to make it operational. Other proposals have been put forward as well, some already integrated into existing United Nations programmes.

What has been lacking until now is the indispensable political will of us all, especially of those countries in a position to contribute most. Creating new funds is of no use if no resources are committed to them. The Millennium Development Goals are very worthy, but if we remain passive, if our collective behaviour remains unchanged, those Goals may never materialize, and the ensuing frustration will be immense.

Now more than ever, good intentions must give rise to concrete gestures. We must put commitments into practice. We must practice what we preach — with audacity, good sense and our feet firmly on the ground, yet boldly, and with new methods, solutions and intense social participation.

For this reason, I am submitting a proposal for consideration by the General Assembly to establish a world committee within the United Nations itself to fight hunger. It would be made up of heads of State or Government from all continents with the purpose of unifying and operationalizing proposals. We hope to attract donations from developed and developing countries according to their capacities, as well as from large private enterprises and non-governmental organizations.

My life experience and political history have taught me to believe above all in the power of dialogue. I will never forget Gandhi's invaluable lesson that when out of violence something good appears to result, this good is at best short-lived, while the evil that it produces is enduring. Democratic dialogue is the most efficient of all tools for change. With the same determination that goes into my endeavours and those

of my partners to make Brazilian society more just and humane, I will invest in the establishment of international partnerships that foster equitable development and a more peace-loving, tolerant and unified world.

This century, so full of technological and material promise, must not be allowed to slide into political and spiritual decline. It is our obligation to mould, under the reinvigorated leadership of the United Nations, an international climate of peace and conciliation. True peace will bloom from democracy, from respect for international law, from the dismantling of deadly weapons arsenals and, above all, from the final eradication of hunger in the world.

We cannot afford to frustrate such high hopes. The greatest and noblest challenge facing humanity is precisely that of becoming more humane. It is time to call peace by its true name: social justice. I am convinced that together we shall be able to grasp this historic opportunity to bring about justice.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Federative Republic of Brazil for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, President of the Federative Republic of Brazil, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. George W. Bush, President of the United States of America

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by His Excellency the President of the United States of America.

Mr. George W. Bush, President of the United States of America, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. George W. Bush, President of the United States of America, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Bush: Twenty-four months ago, and yesterday in the memory of America, the centre of New York City became a battlefield, and a graveyard, and the symbol of an unfinished war. Since that day, terrorists have struck in Bali, in Mombassa, in

Casablanca, in Riyadh, in Jakarta, in Jerusalem, measuring the advance of their cause in the chaos and innocent suffering they leave behind.

Last month, terrorists brought their war to the United Nations itself. The United Nations headquarters in Baghdad stood for order and compassion. For that reason, the terrorists decided it must be destroyed. Among the 22 people who were murdered was Sergio Vieira de Mello. Over the decades, that good and brave man from Brazil gave help to the afflicted in Bangladesh, Cyprus, Mozambique, Lebanon, Cambodia, Central Africa, Kosovo and East Timor, and was aiding the people of Iraq in their time of need. America joins you, his colleagues, in honouring the memory of Mr. Sergio Vieira de Mello and the memory of all those who died with him in the service of the United Nations.

By the victims they choose and by the means they use, the terrorists have clarified the struggle we are in. Those who target relief workers for death have set themselves against all humanity. Those who incite murder and celebrate suicide reveal their contempt for life itself. They have no place in any religious faith, they have no claim on the world's sympathy, and they should have no friend in this Hall.

Events during the past two years have set before us the clearest of divides: between those who seek order and those who spread chaos, between those who work for peaceful change and those who adopt the methods of gangsters, between those who honour the rights of man and those who deliberately take the lives of men, women and children without mercy or shame.

Between those alternatives there is no neutral ground. All Governments that support terror are complicit in a war against civilization. No Government should ignore the threat of terror because to look the other way gives terrorists the chance to regroup, recruit and prepare. All nations that fight terror as if the lives of their own people depended on it will earn the favourable judgement of history.

The former regimes of Afghanistan and Iraq knew those alternatives and made their choices. The Taliban was a sponsor and servant of terrorism. When confronted, that regime chose defiance, and that regime is no more. Afghanistan's President, who is here today, now represents a free people who are building a decent and just society. They are building a nation fully joined in the war against terror.

The regime of Saddam Hussain cultivated ties to terror while it built weapons of mass destruction. It used those weapons in acts of mass murder and refused to account for them when confronted by the world. The Security Council was right to be alarmed. The Security Council was right to demand that Iraq destroy its illegal weapons and prove that it had done so. The Security Council was right to vow serious consequences if Iraq refused to comply. And because there were consequences — because a coalition of nations acted to defend the peace and the credibility of the United Nations — Iraq is free, and today we are joined by the representatives of a liberated country.

Saddam Hussain's monuments have been removed, and not only his statues. The true monuments of his rule and his character — the torture chambers, the rape rooms and the prison cells for innocent children — are closed. And as we discover the killing fields and mass graves of Iraq, the true scale of Saddam's cruelty is being revealed.

The Iraqi people are meeting hardships and challenges, like every nation that has set out on the path of democracy. Yet, their future promises lives of dignity and freedom, and that is a world away from the squalid, vicious tyranny they have known. Across Iraq, life is being improved by liberty. Across the Middle East, people are safer because an unstable aggressor has been removed from power. Across the world, nations are more secure because an ally of terror has fallen.

Our actions in Afghanistan and Iraq were supported by many Governments, and America is grateful to each one. I also recognize that some of the sovereign nations of the Assembly disagreed with our actions. Yet, there was and there remains unity among us on the fundamental principles and objectives of the United Nations. We are dedicated to the defence of our collective security and to the advance of human rights. Those permanent commitments call us to great work in the world, work that we must do together. So, let us move forward. First, we must stand with the people of Afghanistan and Iraq as they build free and stable countries. The terrorists and their allies fear and fight this progress above all because free people embrace hope over resentment and choose peace over violence.

The United Nations has been a friend of the Afghan people, distributing food and medicine, helping refugees return home, advising on a new constitution

and helping to prepare the way for nationwide elections. NATO has taken over the United Nations mandated security force in Kabul. American and coalition forces continue to track and defeat al Qaeda terrorists and the remnants of the Taliban. Our efforts to rebuild that country go on. I have recently proposed to spend an additional \$1.2 billion for the Afghan reconstruction effort, and I urge other nations to continue contributing to that important cause.

In the nation of Iraq, the United Nations is carrying out vital and effective work every day. By the end of 2004, more than 90 per cent of Iraqi children under age five will have been immunized against preventable diseases such as polio, tuberculosis and measles, thanks to the hard work and high ideals of UNICEF. Iraq's food distribution system is operational, delivering nearly a half million tons of food per month, thanks to the skill and expertise of the World Food Programme.

Our international coalition in Iraq is meeting its responsibilities. We are conducting precision raids against terrorists and holdouts of the former regime. Those killers are at war with the Iraqi people. They have made Iraq the central front in the war on terror. And they will be defeated. Our coalition has made sure that Iraq's former dictator will never again use weapons of mass destruction. We are now interviewing Iraqi citizens and analysing records of the old regime to reveal the full extent of its weapons programmes and its long campaign of deception. We are training Iraqi police, border guards and a new army so that the Iraqi people can assume full responsibility for their own security.

At the same time, our coalition is helping to improve the daily lives of the Iraqi people. The old regime built palaces while letting schools decay, so we are rebuilding more than a thousand schools. The old regime starved hospitals of resources, so we have helped to supply and reopen hospitals across Iraq. The old regime built up armies and weapons while allowing the nation's infrastructure to crumble, so we are rehabilitating power plants, water and sanitation facilities, bridges and airports. I have proposed to Congress that the United States provide additional funding for our work in Iraq, the greatest financial commitment of its kind since the Marshall Plan.

Having helped to liberate Iraq, we will honour our pledges to Iraq, and by helping the Iraqi people

build a stable and peaceful country we will make our own countries more secure.

The primary goal of our coalition in Iraq is self-government for the people of Iraq, reached by an orderly and democratic process. That process must unfold according to the needs of Iraqis, neither hurried nor delayed by the wishes of other parties. And the United Nations can contribute greatly to the cause of Iraqi self-government.

America is working with friends and allies on a new Security Council resolution, which will expand the United Nation's role in Iraq. As in the aftermath of other conflicts, the United Nations should assist in developing a constitution, training civil servants and conducting free and fair elections. Iraq now has a Governing Council, the first truly representative institution in that country. Iraq's new leaders are showing the openness and tolerance that democracy requires, and they are also showing courage. Yet every young democracy needs the help of friends. Now the nation of Iraq needs and deserves our aid, and all nations of good will should step forward and provide that support.

The success of a free Iraq will be watched and noted throughout the region. Millions will see that freedom, equality and material progress are possible at the heart of the Middle East. Leaders in the region will face the clearest evidence that free institutions and open societies are the only path to long-term national success and dignity. And a transformed Middle East would benefit the entire world by undermining the ideologies that export violence to other lands.

Iraq as a dictatorship had great power to destabilize the Middle East. Iraq as a democracy will have great power to inspire the Middle East. The advance of democratic institutions in Iraq is setting an example that others, including the Palestinian people, would be wise to follow. The Palestinian cause is betrayed by leaders who cling to power by feeding old hatreds and destroying the good work of others. The Palestinian people deserve their own State. They will gain that State by embracing new leaders committed to reform, to fighting terror and to building peace.

All parties in the Middle East must meet their responsibilities and carry out the commitments they made at Aqaba. Israel must work to create the conditions that will allow a peaceful Palestinian State to emerge. Arab nations must cut off funding and other

support for terrorist organizations. America will work with every nation in the region that acts boldly for the sake of peace.

A second challenge we must confront together is the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. Outlaw regimes that possess nuclear, chemical and biological weapons and the means to deliver them would be able to use blackmail and create chaos in entire regions. Those weapons could be used by terrorists to bring sudden disaster and suffering on a scale we can scarcely imagine. The deadly combination of outlaw regimes, terror networks and weapons of mass murder is a peril that cannot be ignored or wished away. If such a danger is allowed to fully materialize, all words, all protests, will come too late.

Nations of the world must have the wisdom and the will to stop grave threats before they arrive. One crucial step is to secure the most dangerous materials at their source. For more than a decade, the United States has worked with Russia and other States of the former Soviet Union to dismantle, destroy or secure weapons and dangerous materials left over from another era.

Last year in Canada, the G-8 nations agreed to provide up to 20 billion dollars, half of it from the United States, to fight this proliferation risk over the next ten years. Since then, six additional countries have joined the effort. More are needed, and I urge other nations to help us meet this danger.

We are also improving our capability to interdict lethal materials in transit. Through our Proliferation Security Initiative, eleven nations are preparing to search planes, ships, trains and trucks carrying suspect cargo and to seize weapons or missile shipments that raise proliferation concerns. These nations have agreed on a set of interdiction principles consistent with current legal authorities, and we are working to expand the Proliferation Security Initiative to other countries. We are determined to keep the world's most destructive weapons away from all our shores and out of the hands of our common enemies.

Because proliferators will use any route or channel that is open to them, we need the broadest possible cooperation to stop them. Today I ask the United Nations Security Council to adopt a new antiproliferation resolution. That resolution should call on all Members of the United Nations to criminalize the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, to enact strict export controls consistent with international

standards and to secure any and all sensitive materials within their own borders. The United States stands ready to help any nation draft these new laws and to assist in their enforcement.

A third challenge we share is a challenge to our conscience. We must act decisively to meet the humanitarian crises of our time. The United States has begun to carry out the Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief, aimed at preventing AIDS on a massive scale and treating millions who have the disease already. We have pledged 15 billion dollars over five years to fight AIDS around the world.

My country is acting to save lives from famine as well. We are providing more than 1.4 billion dollars in global emergency food aid, and I have asked our United States Congress for 200 million dollars for a new famine fund so that we can act quickly when the first signs of famine appear. Every nation on every continent should generously add their resources to the fight against disease and desperate hunger.

There is another humanitarian crisis, spreading, yet hidden from view. Each year, an estimated eight to nine hundred thousand human beings are bought, sold or forced across the world's borders. Among them are hundreds of thousands of teenage girls and others as young as five who fall victim to the sex trade. This commerce in human life generates billions of dollars each year, much of which is used to finance organized crime. There is a special evil in the abuse and exploitation of the most innocent and vulnerable. The victims of the sex trade see little of life before they see the very worst of life — an underground of brutality and lonely fear. Those who create these victims and profit from their suffering must be severely punished. Those who patronize this industry debase themselves and deepen the misery of others, and Governments that tolerate this trade are tolerating a form of slavery.

This problem has appeared in my own country and we are working to stop it. The Protect Act, which I signed into law this year, makes it a crime for any person to enter the United States or for any citizen to travel abroad for the purpose of sex tourism involving children. The Department of Justice is actively investigating sex tour operators and patrons, who can face up to 30 years in prison. Under the Trafficking Victims Protection Act, the United States is using sanctions against Governments to discourage human trafficking.

The victims of this industry also need help from Members of the United Nations. This begins with clear standards and the certainty of punishment under the laws of every country. Today, some nations make it a crime to sexually abuse children abroad. Such conduct should be a crime in all nations. Governments should inform travellers of the harm this industry does and the severe punishments that will fall on its patrons. The American Government is committing \$50 million to support the good work of organizations that are rescuing women and children from exploitation and giving them shelter, medical treatment and the hope of a new life. I urge other Governments to do their part.

We must show new energy in fighting back an old evil. Nearly two centuries after the abolition of the transatlantic slave trade and more than a century after slavery was officially ended in its last strongholds, the trade in human beings for any purpose must not be allowed to thrive in our time.

All the challenges I have spoken of this morning require urgent attention and moral clarity. Helping Afghanistan and Iraq to succeed as free nations in a transformed region; cutting off the avenues of proliferation; abolishing modern forms of slavery — these are the kinds of great tasks for which the United Nations was founded. In each case, careful discussion is needed and, also, decisive action. Our good intentions will be credited only if we achieve good outcomes. As an original signer of the United Nations Charter, the United States of America is committed to the United Nations and we show that commitment by working to fulfil the United Nations stated purposes and by giving meaning to its ideals.

The founding documents of the United Nations and the founding documents of America stand in the same tradition. Both assert that human beings should never be reduced to objects of power or commerce, because their dignity is inherent. Both recognize a moral law that stands above men and nations, but which must be defended and enforced by men and nations. And both point the way to peace — the peace that comes when all are free. We secure that peace with our courage and we must show that courage together.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the United States of America for the statement he has just made.

Mr. George W. Bush, President of the United States of America, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

**Address by Mr. Alejandro Toledo Manrique,
President of the Republic of Peru**

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Peru.

Mr. Alejandro Toledo Manrique, President of the Republic of Peru, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Alejandro Toledo Manrique, President of the Republic of Peru, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Toledo Manrique (*spoke in Spanish*): Peru has no doubt that multilateralism is the best instrument for confronting global challenges, as well as for guaranteeing peace and international security. For that reason, the United Nations is indispensable. All Member States must have the conviction to strengthen it, to contribute to its institutional regeneration and to reform it. With a reformed United Nations, we will continue our struggle against poverty; we will maintain the world development agenda; we will assure democracy; and we will fight decisively against drug trafficking and international terrorism.

The terrorist attacks taking place in different areas of the world and the threats to peace in several regions create an international climate of instability and insecurity that calls for urgent solutions. Terrorism conspires against the democracies of the world. Terrorism conspires against the health of the world economy. Terrorism contributes to making the poor even poorer. Peru strongly condemns the terrorist attack on the United Nations headquarters in Baghdad and wishes to pay sincere tribute to all the victims, in particular to Sergio Vieira de Mello, Special Representative of the Secretary-General.

We cannot accept terrorism as a political tool. In our case, the 20 years of violence bequeathed by the Sendero Luminoso is a hard lesson to cope with. According to the final report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, recently submitted to my Government, thousands of lives were lost and more than \$30 billion in losses were reported. This report is

the result of a resolute political decision of our Government to make sure that Peru never again has to face irrational acts of terror.

Truth must also be a means to prevent impunity and to lead us to reconciliation with justice. My Government is firmly struggling against impunity. That is why we consider that the fugitives who fled Peru when the corrupt regime of the past decade was overthrown should answer to justice for the gravity of the crimes they committed. We will insure these people a fair trial and all the guarantees of due process, within the framework of the Inter-American Convention on Human Rights and Peruvian law.

That is why we hope that our requests for extradition will be taken into account. Democratic States have the responsibility to avoid impunity. In this regard, the Peruvian State wishes in this Assembly to thank the 20 friendly countries that have announced their decision to detain anyone on the list of extraditables if they enter their territories.

Poverty, social exclusion and fundamentalist ideologies are among the causes of the current crises. The hopes of our countries to be part of an inclusive globalization are not bearing fruit. Despite some achievements at the national level, there is a wide chasm to bridge if we are to build such an inclusive globalization. For example, in the case of Peru, despite an unfavourable international environment the economy grew by 5.2 per cent last year, one of the highest rates in Latin America. Inflation was below 1 per cent, international reserves rose to their highest level yet, and exports reached unprecedented figures.

However, we must concede that all these indicators are not enough to make the common people feel the benefits of such macroeconomic achievements in their own pockets. Today, it is necessary for the global economy to reach an annual average growth of 7 to 8 per cent if we wish to reduce poverty and to create employment. If we in the developing world, particularly in Latin America, grow by 6 or 7 per cent, it will barely be enough to recover the per capita income of 1970. We have to achieve adequate growth as soon as possible. The poor cannot wait another 15 years for their economies to grow in a sustained manner that will reduce poverty.

Democratic governance in Latin America is at risk. There is no doubt that there is a correlation between the health of the world economy, social

inclusion and democratic governance. World leaders cannot close their eyes. There is no possible governance without a reduction of poverty. We must be creative and courageous in order to ensure that Wall Street's macroeconomic requirements meet the expectations of Main Street.

Last year before this Assembly, I highlighted the need to defend democracy from market turbulence by creating innovative financial mechanisms. We said that the time had come to build a new global consensus to reaffirm democracy and re-evaluate development with social equity. Since then, Peru has been working on a series of initiatives in this regard. Last May, 19 democracies of Latin America and the Caribbean, members of the Rio Group — over which I have the honour to preside — approved a key document that we call the Cusco Consensus. This document comprises four Peruvian initiatives on innovative financial mechanisms that allow us to finance democratic governance in the region; to increase public investment in roads, hospitals and schools; to create jobs; and to supplement private investment.

In relation to one of these proposals, last August, jointly with the President of Brazil, Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, we decided to work together on the establishment of the South American Infrastructure Authority project, which will operate as a fiduciary agency to facilitate the financing of investment projects for the integration of South America. I am sure that that experience can be duplicated in other parts of the world.

Likewise, we have signed a memorandum of understanding on physical and economic integration to set into motion three axes of development integration — in Peru, Bolivia, Brazil and Ecuador — on the road to South America's integration. Accordingly, Peru signed an agreement that will lead to the creation of a free trade zone with MERCOSUR. From this international forum, we would like reiterate that those efforts and achievements in the area of integration constitute decisive steps on the path towards building a South American community of nations. However, I wish to point out that, beyond the decisions that two or more countries of the subregion may take, it will be essential for the international community to commit itself to the initiatives emanating from an exercise in collective reflection.

Developing nations are concerned about the alarming increase in external vulnerabilities resulting from instability in financial flows and their impact on investment levels and economic growth in our region. Those countries also perceive the presence of protectionism in the area of trade, in particular on the part of certain industrialized nations. I would like to be frank in this connection: we ask developed countries not to demand that we open our markets while they protect their products with billions of dollars in subsidies every year, especially in the agricultural sector. Our countries can no longer withstand asymmetrical relations in the area of trade. The time has come to build a two-way business highway that is more transparent and predictable. We are being asked to open up our markets in the agricultural sector while there are still countries that are investing billions of dollars every day to subsidize their own products. Do not ask us to practice something that you do not practice yourselves. Our countries are aware of the fact that we have to be competitive, but we must build that two-way commercial highway.

Peru is especially concerned about the negative results of the recently held ministerial conference of the World Trade Organization in Cancun, which, despite some progress, was unable to reach consensus. There is a continuing desire for multilateralism and free trade in Peru. We therefore trust that there will be a return to negotiation in the next few months so as to realize the goals set out at Doha, which placed development foursquare on the agenda of the WTO.

We have an obligation to build a more just, secure and humane world. That is why today I ask the United Nations and our great friend of peace, Secretary-General Kofi Annan, to exercise their great authority and prestige to promote within the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the Inter-American Development Bank and the member countries of the Group of 8 a wide debate on the innovative financial mechanisms that will make it possible to finance democratic governance in the region; increase public investment in schools, hospitals and roads; generate jobs and promote private investment. That is the only way by which globalization can be inclusive, and by which governance can be strengthened. May God bless peace in the world.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Peru for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Alejandro Toledo Manrique, President of the Republic of Peru, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Jacques Chirac, President of the French Republic

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the French Republic.

Mr. Jacques Chirac, President of the French Republic, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Jacques Chirac, President of the French Republic, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Chirac (spoke in French): Sergio Vieira de Mello was the pride of the United Nations. Murdered on 19 August along with his colleagues, he will remain in our memories. Let us dedicate this session to that great servant of the world and of peace.

The United Nations has just emerged from one of the most serious challenges in its history. Respect for the Charter and the use of force were at the heart of the debate. The war, which was launched without the Security Council's authorization, has undermined the multilateral system.

Having come to terms with that crisis, our Organization can now continue to move forward; for it is above all in this forum — the melting pot of the international order — that we must exercise our responsibilities to the world of today as well as to future generations.

In an open world no one can live in isolation, no one can act alone in the name of all and no one can accept the anarchy of a society without rules. There is no alternative to the United Nations. But in order to meet today's challenges, this fundamental choice, expressed by the Charter, requires a far-reaching reform of our Organization.

Multilateralism is crucial, because it ensures the participation of all in the management of world affairs. It is a guarantee of legitimacy and democracy, especially when decisions must be made with respect to the use of force or to the laying down of universal norms.

Multilateralism is effective. In Monterrey and Johannesburg, it allowed us to transcend North-South confrontation and to open the way to promising partnerships, in particular with the African continent.

Multilateralism is modern, because it alone makes it possible to comprehend contemporary problems globally and in all of their complexity.

First, let me touch on the settlement of conflicts that threaten international peace and security.

In Iraq, the transfer of sovereignty to the Iraqis, who must have sole responsibility for their destiny, is essential for stability and reconstruction. It is up to the United Nations to lend its legitimacy to that process. It is also up to the United Nations to assist with the gradual transfer of administrative and economic responsibilities to the Iraqi institutions, according to a realistic timetable, and to help the Iraqis draft a constitution and hold general elections.

Finally, it is up to the United Nations to entrust a mandate to a multinational force, commanded, naturally, by the main troop contributor — that is, the United States — in order to ensure the security of Iraq and of all those helping to rebuild the country.

Thus the international community and the Iraqi people, united around a common project, will together put an end to the tragic decades of that great country's history.

In the Middle East, ravaged by despair and hatred, only strong political will on both sides to implement the law as stipulated by the United Nations can pave the way for a just and lasting solution.

The international community must restore a dynamic for peace. It must involve itself in the implementation of the road map. That should be the objective of the upcoming meeting of the Quartet, to be held at the ministerial level. France believes that the idea of a monitoring mechanism is as relevant as ever, and that the convening of an international conference is a goal to be attained as quickly as possible.

Given the present tense situation, France calls on the parties not to succumb to the temptation of a test of strength and of a futile radicalization.

Another major challenge is the fight against international terrorism. This fight is well under way, under the auspices of the Security Council and within the context of our treaties. The horror of 11 September

cemented our common resolve. This threat strikes at the very heart of our democracies and our societies. We are using force to combat terrorism, but that is not enough. It will re-emerge again and again if we allow extremism and fanaticism to flourish — if we fail to realize that it seeks justification in the world's unresolved conflicts and economic and social imbalances.

Given the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, we reject the policy of *fait accompli*. We must stand united to guarantee the universality of treaties and the effectiveness of non-proliferation regimes. In order to ensure compliance, we must also develop our means of action. France has proposed the creation of a permanent corps of inspectors under the authority of the Security Council. Let us give fresh impetus to this policy. Let us convene a summit meeting of the Security Council to outline a true plan of action of the United Nations against proliferation.

At this time, let us demand that North Korea completely, verifiably and irreversibly dismantle its military programme. Let us demand that Iran sign and implement, unconditionally and without delay, a strengthened nuclear safeguards agreement with the International Atomic Energy Agency.

Sustainable development poses yet another challenge, because half of humankind is living in conditions of insecurity or extreme poverty. Will we be able to globalize solidarity, as our peoples demand, in response to the inevitable globalization of the economy?

We agree on the objectives. We are bound by the Millennium Goals. But, in order to attain those goals, strong political impetus remains necessary. I propose that heads of State and Government meet in New York in 2005 for a preliminary progress review. I hope that this session of the General Assembly will confirm the determination of States to overcome the failure of Cancun and to ensure the success of the Doha Development Round.

In order to carry out the missions entrusted to it and to remedy its blatant shortcomings, the United Nations must evolve. Three watchwords, I believe, must guide us: democracy, authority, effectiveness. Thanks to the Secretary-General, progress has been made, and new avenues are opening up. It is now up to States to move forward without further ado and to put

an end to the adverse consequences of the stalemate over reforms.

The United Nations is suffering from the current weakness of the General Assembly. And yet, it is here that a debate should be organized and a consensus crafted regarding solutions to major problems. A culture of confrontation must give way to a culture of action aimed at achieving our common goals, which we should determine together.

The primary responsibility for the maintenance of peace and security rests with the Security Council. It is therefore essential to its legitimacy that its composition reflect the state of the world. It must be expanded to include new permanent members, because the presence of major countries is necessary. France, naturally, is thinking of Germany and of Japan, but also of some leading countries of Asia, Africa and America. We also need new elected members, to make the Council even more representative. With the decisive impetus of the five permanent members, we all need to resume discussions, mindful of the general interest.

Such reform should be accompanied by a strengthening of the Council's authority. It is the Council that should set the bounds with respect to the use of force. No one can claim the right to use force unilaterally and preventively. Conversely, in the face of mounting threats, States must be assured that the Council has at its disposal the appropriate means of evaluation and of collective action, and that it has the will to act.

We all are very committed to the sovereignty of States. But its scope can and should be limited in the case of serious violations of human rights and of humanitarian law. The Security Council is taking steps in that direction, and France supports this development.

Meanwhile, crimes against humanity are being suppressed more effectively with the establishment of the International Criminal Court, whose jurisdiction is universal. This historic step forward must be accompanied by a strengthening of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, under a commission equipped to discharge its duties and its mission.

We now realize that globalization demands stronger economic, social and environmental governance. To that end, France proposes the creation of a new political forum representative of the present

economic state of today's world in all its diversity. That council would be responsible for providing the necessary impetus to international institutions, for improving their coordination and for anticipating and tackling global problems more effectively.

Effectiveness also depends on increased financial resources. France calls for two changes.

First, the trend towards increasing voluntary contributions at the expense of mandatory contributions must be reversed. Failing that, we will end up with a pick-and-choose United Nations, which is an outdated vision and a harmful one.

Secondly, we need to make progress in mobilizing funds for development and development assistance. France wants to meet the official development assistance target of 0.7 per cent by the year 2012. But this effort, together with that of the European Union, will obviously not suffice to release the necessary funds needed to finance the Millennium Goals each year. France therefore supports the innovative concept of an international financial facility. I would also like us to give pragmatic, speedy consideration to international solidarity levies, a kind of tax on the wealth generated by globalization and given over to development.

To advance on these issues, I completely approve of the Secretary-General's intention to gather around him a committee of independent wise men and women responsible for submitting proposals.

Against the risk of a world without order delivered up to violence, let us work to establish the rule of international law. Against the injustice and suffering of a world of widening inequalities — even though it has never been so rich — let us choose solidarity. Against the chaos of a world shaken by ecological disasters, let us call for a sharing of responsibility around a United Nations environmental organization. Against the barbarity of a world in which fundamental rights are all too often held up to ridicule, where the integrity of mankind is under threat, where indigenous peoples — the heirs to an irreplaceable heritage — vanish amid silence and indifference, let us uphold the demands of ethics. Against the peril of a clash of civilizations, finally, let us insist on the equal dignity of cultures, respect for diversity and the value of dialogue.

With the Charter adopted in the name of the Peoples of the United Nations, the founders proclaimed their faith in these ideals. Let us seek to be worthy of them. Let us establish the United Nations at the heart of this planetary democracy that is so vital in our day and age.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the French Republic for the statement that he just made.

Mr. Jacques Chirac, President of the French Republic, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Joseph Urusemal, President of the Federated States of Micronesia

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Federated States of Micronesia.

Mr. Joseph Urusemal, President of the Federated States of Micronesia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Joseph Urusemal, President of the Federated States of Micronesia, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Urusemal: I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your election. My Government is deeply gratified by the recognition of your accomplishments, especially given that you are a fellow islander. We are confident you will lead the work of this body with the same high competence as your distinguished predecessor, His Excellency Jan Kavan of the Czech Republic.

Before going further I must pause in respectful remembrance of the second anniversary of the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001. We honour the memory of all who were lost. I must also express our sincere condolences over the great loss of life recently at the United Nations headquarters in Baghdad.

I am grateful for the privilege of appearing before this body for the first time, as President of the Federated States of Micronesia. We feel a deep sense of responsibility in joining with nations present here to work toward a better world for all peoples.

For the past several years, much of the discussion here and elsewhere has focused on political challenges around the world. After 11 September, it is not at all surprising that these challenges have commanded the lion's share of everyone's attention. We in the Federated States of Micronesia remain committed to the eradication of terrorism in all its forms, and will continue to play the role open to us as the world strives to reach this goal.

However, the challenges of the environment and of sustainable development that occupied so much of our attention during the 1990s have not gone away. Despite the immediacy of so many pressing demands today, those remain challenges that the international community cannot afford to put on hold. We cannot put them on hold because they are part and parcel of the worldwide security challenge, especially over the longer term.

No part of our world is immune to the wide range of fundamental security threats. War and terrorism are only consequences of their deeper root causes: poverty, human injustice and, more recently, environmental degradation. These are most often discussed in the context of the more populous regions of the world, but I ask the Assembly not to overlook the fact that they also present themselves to the small island developing States.

The unique vulnerability of our island States to all those scourges is widely recognized. Even so, global threat assessments most often are not followed up by a realistic allocation of resources to the more remote — yet also more vulnerable — places, where threats to global security often find their origin or seek refuge. I submit to the Assembly that the region of the Pacific islands has for too long been overlooked in that way.

We welcomed the initiative of the international community to address those and related development problems during the World Summit on Sustainable Development. But we returned home, and we still find ourselves struggling just as much as ever with fundamental needs. As memories of Johannesburg are pushed into the background by seemingly more urgent crises, our people are beginning to ask questions about this process. They are asking whether repetitious discussion of traditional development strategies at a lengthening string of summit venues offers the most productive avenue for achieving real development

goals. We must consider these things with a broader consciousness. The challenges are enormous, and they are immediate. I say to the Assembly respectfully that business-as-usual multilateralism is not getting the job done.

Before proceeding, I should say that today's Micronesians do enjoy a much-improved standard of living in comparison with the conditions that existed when we were introduced to the world economy less than 50 years ago. However, we still have very far to go before we can reach the levels of even the moderately successful developing countries, let alone of the industrialized world.

In saying what I do here about my own country's difficulties, I must add that we are by no means alone. Therefore, we stand with developing countries everywhere, and we fully support the positions to be expressed here by His Majesty the King of Morocco on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, and by His Excellency the Prime Minister of Mauritius on behalf of the Alliance of Small Island States.

We must all do more. For our part, the small island developing States need to ensure that we meet our obligations and fulfil our undertakings to the global community. We are not just supplicants; we have roles to play. My country has made commitments to environmental responsibility in line with our capacity. We have pledged increased accountability and oversight of development assistance. We have resolved to build our capacity to govern more effectively and to increase regional interaction.

I believe that all developing countries should explore how we can mobilize our limited resources, individually and collectively, even as we seek assistance. In that regard, I commend to the Assembly's attention the communiqué of the Pacific Islands Forum issued this year at Auckland, New Zealand. It is illustrative of the kind of regional collaboration I encourage here. For example, we in the Forum agreed this year to an important and comprehensive statement of principles fundamental to good governmental leadership and recognized by all. I think that it deserves close study by the Assembly. Serious attention was also given by the Forum leaders to the challenges presented by international criminal elements attracted to our region. They are attracted in part by our "out-of-sight, out-of-mind" status. It was recognized at the Forum that, given our limitations

individually, we can confront those challenges only through regional, collective action.

We are also now seeing, more than ever before, entire regions of the world marginalized in the global economy, as witness the sad breakdown of the World Trade Organization (WTO) meetings recently. Some countries have been virtually ignored until social and political conditions have severely deteriorated.

We are hearing more frequently the term "failed State". It has no clear definition, but it has been used on occasion to justify outside intervention. That may be necessary under certain circumstances, but it is in the interests of all that such conditions should not develop in the first place. I submit that the causes of any such so-called failure can be traced far beyond the borders of the unfortunate country that is so labelled.

The time is ripe for a new way of looking at international peace and security. No longer can economic, social and environmental issues exist in a parallel universe, divorced from geopolitical considerations. The linkages are becoming all too clear, as the alarming findings of this year's United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) report on implementation of the Millennium Development Goals confirm.

Despite our best efforts, we still face the full range of threats to our natural environment. Those threats are not diminishing. In fact, on a global scale, progress by the world community has been glacial in the face of ever more pressing demands for action. We may say to ourselves that any disastrous outcomes lie well in the future, but we can act only in the present. We are literally making — or failing to make — life decisions for the yet-unborn.

One of the most clear and present emergencies has figured prominently in our statements in the general debate every year since our country became a United Nations Member; I refer to the need for immediate international action to combat climate change. Regrettably, I cannot speak with any less concern this year. If anything, our appeals must become more urgent. At a time when we speak of many wars, there is also the war against climate change — a war that mankind cannot afford to lose.

I know you can appreciate better than most, Mr. President, that, for my family and me, the issue of climate change is a present reality. My island, Woleai,

in Yap State, is an atoll with no point higher than two meters above sea level. The frequency and the intensity of storms in our region have been increasing for some time.

During the last year we experienced three major typhoons, as well as other destructive storms. One of them triggered massive mudslides on the state of Chuuk's higher islands, and 50 people died. In Yap state, a recent storm washed away a large and very old cemetery. These and similar recent events in our other states are unprecedented. Everything we are, and hope to achieve as a people, is under grave threat because of global climate change.

Having confirmed that the climate change crisis is real, the entire world also now possesses indisputable evidence that its steady progression can be laid at the doorstep of human activity. Yet some of the worst polluters among the industrialized countries see it as their top priority to protect vested interests. They are purposely delaying the immediate action that is required to begin to turn the tide of destructive climate alteration.

In the Framework Convention, it was agreed by all that those bearing the responsibility for causing this problem must take the lead in resolving it. Yet, I must ask today, where is that leadership?

It is very sad that the Kyoto Protocol, which is a positive achievement, has been converted by some Governments into a political target — a rallying cry for the worst polluters. In fact, it represents nothing more than a small first step that must be followed up by strong subsequent actions if the war against climate change is to be at all effective. The scornful attitude toward the Protocol shown by some countries will doom the entire Framework Convention to utter failure if the current situation remains unchanged. The Kyoto Protocol must be brought into effect without further delay. The industrial Powers cannot continue to make the plea of Saint Augustine, "Lord, make me thy servant, but not yet awhile."

Since our people live in such close harmony with the natural environment, we also face a host of other pressing environmental issues. Our coral reefs are getting a great deal of international attention partly because of their potential for commercial exploitation. We appreciate those possibilities and are determined to preserve our legal rights in any exploitation that takes place.

But we also appreciate the reefs as our natural buffers against the sea and the hosts for marine resources far beyond the regular bounty of present-day fishing. This is more than a resource; it is a lifeline for many island countries. The serious decline in the health of coral reefs all over the world must be reversed.

Stocks of our only substantial economic resource — tuna — have seen a marked decline in recent years. Other species and key elements of the ocean ecosystem are also now imperilled as never before. The Federated States of Micronesia will be lobbying for an aggressive oceans resource protection policy in both the regional and international arenas.

Water itself, and access to it, is very much a threatened resource in our country, where we are surrounded by the ocean but have limited fresh water. We rely upon rainwater and its collection in the lenses that lies beneath our atolls. Every drop is precious. We say that a vulnerable life, such as that of a child, is like morning dew on a taro leaf, to be handled with care so that it does not slip away.

Members may be surprised to learn that islands in the Pacific Ocean, so often pictured in everyone's dream of paradise, are more concerned about drought than any other natural threat, including typhoons. Not only do we experience the salt-water corruption of our fresh water and our food crops, as a result of increased storm activity and sea-level rise, we also now must try to cope with droughts brought on by increasingly unpredictable El Niño activity linked to climate change.

Fortunately, the world in general seems to be waking up to the universal human requirement for access to adequate, clean water. The special exposure of island countries received welcome attention at the recent Third World Water Forum in Kyoto. In addition, I wish to point to a very important, first-ever interregional collaboration on this vital subject, in the form of a Memorandum of Understanding recently concluded between our South Pacific Applied Geoscience Commission and the Caribbean Environmental Health Institute.

I have spoken much about my country's concerns but, of course, we are not alone in these concerns. The world's small island developing States face largely the same set of issues in different degrees.

For that reason, we were grateful for the international attention generated by the first United Nations Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, held in Barbados in 1994. The Barbados Programme of Action, which was the product of that Conference, has been a limited success. The Conference succeeded in focusing attention on the unique set of problems our small island nations face. However, it seems that the international community has to some extent been content to raise awareness of the issues, while showing a waning interest in implementing specific measures during the years following the Conference itself.

We applaud the decision to hold a follow-up conference in Mauritius in 2004, and we look forward to a frank evaluation of the progress, or lack thereof, in implementing the Barbados Plan of Action during the past 10 years. It is my hope that the Mauritius conference will afford an opportunity to regain lost momentum.

This is a landmark year for my nation. We have completed 17 years in a post-trusteeship political relationship with the United States. By all accounts, this has been a success. Never before has free association been attempted on this scale.

I am pleased that both my country and our development partner, the United States, have seen fit to continue this relationship into the future by amending the treaty between us known as the Compact of Free Association. As we celebrate the success that this renewal represents, it is proper to recall the long and effective stewardship of our region by the United Nations Trusteeship Council.

We are grateful for the lasting contribution of the United Nations system to the history of Micronesia, and we look forward to continuing to work in this body and others in the United Nations system to reach our collective goals.

In closing, I would like to refer to the words of the American President, Franklin D. Roosevelt, who once said,

"If I were asked to state the great objective which church and state are both demanding for the sake of every man and woman and child in this country, I would say that the great objective is a more abundant life."

I believe that the President was speaking of true abundance, not only in a material sense, but also in the sense of the security of mind and body that comes with freedom, opportunity and human fulfilment.

We must ask ourselves whether what we are striving for here at the United Nations is faithful to that lofty ideal. This Organization is the greatest forum ever created on this planet. It cannot afford to allow its important role in conflict management to push aside the even greater task of managing the conditions that produce those conflicts. We bring together here, under the guidance of the Charter, for the first time in human history, all kinds of resources necessary to lead mankind to a more abundant life. Let it not be said of us later that we failed in that task.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Federated States of Micronesia for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Joseph Urusemal, President of the Federated States of Micronesia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Pascal Couchepin, President of the Swiss Confederation

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Swiss Confederation.

Mr. Pascal Couchepin, President of the Swiss Confederation, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Pascal Couchepin, President of the Swiss Confederation, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Couchepin: In 2000, at the dawn of the new millennium, the heads of State and Government of the Member States met here to reaffirm their shared goals. Three years later, that international consensus has eroded. Member States perceive threats differently, and they do not share the same priorities. Some States emphasize the fight against terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. In other regions in the world, civil wars, small arms, poverty, hunger and AIDS are the main dangers.

Can the international community reach a consensus on the objectives to be attained and the way to achieve them? What importance should we give to multilateral cooperation? Has the time not come to review the system of collective security inherited from the Second World War? Could it be that the United Nations is due for far-reaching reform?

The fact that so many heads of State and Government have responded to the Secretary-General's invitation is a preliminary answer. It is an encouraging sign. The Member States look to the United Nations to seek solutions. We must seize the opportunity of this debate to reaffirm our commitment to multilateral cooperation and the goals of the United Nations.

Life in society demands a minimum of order, rules and solidarity. That also applies to international relations. Switzerland attaches great importance to respect for international law, which explains its commitment to humanitarian law or to the International Criminal Court. Without international law, many countries would feel themselves at the mercy of the law of the mightiest. The great powers, like the smaller ones, need a multilateral framework to resolve their differences.

The time has come to rethink the role of the United Nations. Almost 60 years after the foundation of the Organization, the threats have changed, as have the geopolitical realities. Terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction have taken on more threatening dimensions. Civil wars have multiplied. AIDS has become the most deadly epidemic in the history of humankind. Poverty is far from being eradicated.

Security can no longer be addressed in purely military terms. We need to review our vision of security by focusing greater attention on individuals. By broadening our approach to security and by placing fresh emphasis on human security, we can overcome some of the current differences between the North and the South.

Together with other countries, Switzerland is endeavouring to promote the idea of human security. This year it will commit itself to the issues of the proliferation of light weapons and anti-personnel mines. We hope the General Assembly will establish a working group to develop an instrument for marking and tracing small arms. If the Members of the

Organization concur, Switzerland is ready to take the chair.

The Swiss Government also takes an active interest in the issue of migration. We are working with other countries to establish a global commission on international migration, which will be asked to make recommendations.

In order to promote human security, we must also keep the promises made in the field of development. In the Millennium Declaration we have undertaken to ensure that globalization becomes a positive force for all humankind. To that end, we have adopted a series of clear objectives, and deadlines to meet them have been set. But merely proclaiming goals is not enough; we must now fulfil them. If the rich countries — and my country is among them — do not keep their promises, they will end up causing poor countries to lose hope.

In Cancun, the members of the World Trade Organization (WTO) tried to revive trade liberalization. Although positions converged somewhat, disagreements persist and there is a risk of lasting failure. That would result in weakened growth at the global level, to the detriment of all countries. We need to give negotiations another chance and, above all, avoid the lure of protectionism.

To affirm a belief in the multilateral system should not blind us to its weak points. The United Nations needs more thorough reform.

Switzerland considers that the role of the United Nations in the economic and social fields must be defined. We must better take account of the links between international security and economic development. Relations between the United Nations, the Bretton Woods institutions and WTO should also be reconsidered by a group of independent eminent persons.

We must also focus our attention on the functioning of the Organization itself. In the General Assembly, resolutions that are adopted are too often reduced to the lowest common denominator or to a long, vague wish list, with no real impact. The Assembly must be revitalized. There is a need to reduce the number of agenda items, limit the length of texts and avoid the proliferation of resolutions on issues that overlap.

With regard to the Security Council, a consensus already exists on the fact that its composition no longer

sufficiently reflects contemporary geopolitical realities. Switzerland supports the idea of enlarging the Council. That could be done without harming its effectiveness as long as the increase in the number of members remains within reasonable bounds and takes into account the various regional sensibilities.

In the last few years, countries not members of the Council have been given more opportunities to participate in the Council's work. Switzerland welcomes those efforts. However, the crucial decisions too often remain confined to the restricted circle of the five permanent members. All members of the Security Council should be permanently involved in the decision-making process. It is also important to institutionalize the modalities of participation for the other Member States. For example, consultation mechanisms with those States most directly affected by conflict areas should be strengthened. It should be necessary for non-permanent members of the Council to feel a greater responsibility to represent the views of those who elected them.

The right of veto is a privilege involving special responsibilities. It should be used only in exceptional circumstances. When a permanent member exercises its right of veto, would it not be desirable for it then to explain its action to the General Assembly? That way, that member could make its position better understood by the international community.

Another goal is to open the United Nations to civil society. Switzerland welcomes the decision of the Secretary-General to set up a panel of experts to consider the possible ways to achieve that.

It is in this spirit of openness towards civil society that preparations are being carried out for the World Summit on the Information Society, due to take place in Geneva in December. More than half of the world's population does not have access to a telephone. The use of Internet is even more limited. The goal of the Summit, a part of the larger framework of the Millennium Goals, is to discuss ways to narrow the digital divide between the rich and poor countries. New technologies must be placed at the service of development, human rights and democracy.

I invite all Member States to participate actively in the Summit. Many heads of State and Government have announced their intention to attend, which gives me great pleasure. I must address, above all, my colleagues of the industrialized countries we must

shoulder our responsibilities. I appeal to them not to miss that important appointment. We need a North-South dialogue at the highest level. As I have already said, we must keep our promises.

In recent months, Iraq has made visible some international tensions. We must now search together to find solutions for the future. We all face the same danger: that of Iraq falling prey to disorder and instability. The United Nations must be given its place in Iraq and must receive a clearer mandate from the Security Council. At the same time, determined progress must be made towards restoring Iraqi sovereignty.

In its national history, Switzerland has a long tradition of harmonious coexistence among its different communities. We well understand that no single political model fits all situations. Nevertheless, Switzerland is ready to share its experience and to provide support for the process of drawing up a new constitution in Iraq.

Switzerland joined the United Nations as a neutral country. That does not prevent it from defending the universal values to which it is attached. In this, Switzerland wishes to collaborate with the other Member States, drawing on the strength of the Organization. At this point, I would like to pay tribute to the United Nations and all its staff, who have just suffered a deadly attack in Baghdad. Every day, throughout the world, the United Nations and its specialized agencies do irreplaceable work.

The Secretary-General has spoken of peace as a dream in suspense. I believe that this also applies to the other ideals for which the United Nations stands: justice, solidarity and respect for human dignity. Dreams are an essential part of the vision of the United Nations, but so are action, realism, courage and perseverance.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Swiss Confederation for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Pascal Couchepin, President of the Swiss Confederation, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Thabo Mbeki, President of the Republic of South Africa

The President: The Assembly will hear an address by the President of the Republic of South Africa.

Mr. Thabo Mbeki, President of the Republic of South Africa, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Thabo Mbeki, President of the Republic of South Africa, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Mbeki: May I congratulate you, Sir, for assuming the mantle of the presidency for this session of the Assembly and thank the outgoing President, Mr. Jan Kavan. I would also like to echo what other speakers have said about the death of the dedicated United Nations workers who lost their lives in the bombing of the United Nations headquarters in Baghdad last month, including Sergio Vieira de Mello, an outstanding international civil servant.

When we met here last year, we were all concerned about what would happen in Iraq. At the same time, we were concerned about what role the United Nations would play in the resolution of the Iraq affair. Dramatic events since then have provided answers to those questions. However, those dramatic events have raised important and disturbing questions about the very future of the United Nations. Central among them is the question, does the United Nations have a future as a strong and effective multilateral organization enjoying the confidence of the peoples of the world and capable of addressing the matters that are of concern to all humanity?

Quite correctly, as we meet here this time, while still preoccupied by the issue of the future of Iraq, I am certain that none of us wants to rehash the debate that took place on this matter in the period following the last general debate in the General Assembly. While for some time after that general debate we were concerned to provide answers to questions about the role of the United Nations in Iraq, today we have to answer questions about the impact of the Iraq affair on the future of the United Nations. Matters have evolved in such a manner that to our limited understanding it seems extremely difficult to resolve the issue of the

role of the United Nations in Iraq, unless we answer the question about the future of the United Nations as a legitimate expression of the collective will of the peoples of the world and the principal guarantor of international peace and security, among other global issues.

Mr. Kirn (Slovenia), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Put differently, we could say that what is decided about the role of the United Nations in Iraq will at the same time decide what will become of the United Nations in the context of its Charter and of the important global objectives that have been set since the Charter was adopted.

This is not a case of the tail wagging the dog; rather, history has placed at our feet an urgent and practical test case that obliges us to answer the question: what do we, collectively, want the United Nations to be? What do we do to distinguish the trees from the forest? In that regard we must make the point directly, that as South Africans, we are partners and activists who campaign in favour of a strong and effective United Nations. We do so because of the place our country and people occupy in the contemporary world.

We believe that everything that has happened places an obligation on the United Nations to reflect on a number of fundamental issues that are of critical importance to the evolution of human society. We are convinced that this General Assembly would disappoint the expectations of the peoples of the world and put itself in jeopardy if, for any reason whatsoever, it did not address these issues.

We speak as we do because we represent the people who are more sensitive to the imperatives of what the world decides, given our experience during a period when apartheid South Africa was correctly a matter of focused and sustained interest by the United Nations and the peoples of the world, including ordinary folk, even in the most marginalized areas of our globe.

This Organization, and all of us singly and collectively, has spoken and frequently speaks about the phenomenon of globalization. Correctly, we speak of a global village driven by recognition of the fact of the integration of all peoples within a common and interdependent global society.

Certainly, humanity is more integrated today than it was when the United Nations was established more than fifty years ago. However, many have drawn attention to the fact that, whereas objective social processes have led to the emergence of the global village, all of our political collectives have not yet succeeded in designing the institutions of governance made necessary by the reality of the birth of this global village.

Correct observations have also been made that the use of the image and concept of the village does not imply that the residents of this village are equal. The reality is that the same processes that bring all of us closer together in a global village are simultaneously placing the residents of the global village in different positions. Some have emerged as dominant, and the rest as the dominated, with the dominant being the decision makers and the dominated being the recipients and implementers of those decisions.

To the same extent that our political collectives have not designed the institutions responsive to the evolution of the global village, so have they failed to respond to the imbalance in the distribution of power inherent in contemporary global human society. We speak here of power in all fields of human activity. Left to its internal and autonomous impulses, the process of globalization will inevitably result in the further enhancement of the domination of the dominant and the entrenchment of the subservience of the dominated, however much the latter might resent such domination.

This will include the perpetuation of the dominant positions by those who are dominant to ensure the sustenance of their capacity to set the agenda of the global village in the interest of their own neighbourhoods within that village. Inherent within this is, necessarily, reliance on the use of superior power, of which the dominant dispose, to achieve the objective of the perpetuation of the situation of an unequal distribution of power.

In this situation, it is inevitable that the pursuit of power in itself will assert itself as a unique legitimate objective, apparently detached from any need to define the uses of such power. This also signifies the deification of force in all its forms as the final arbiter in the ordering of human affairs.

However, from the point of view of the disempowered, the struggle to ensure the use of such power to address their own interests becomes a

strategic objective they cannot avoid. Necessarily this means that power would have to be redistributed. That would be done to empower the disempowered and to regulate the use of power by those who are powerful.

Thus we come back to what I said earlier. Because we are poor, we are partisan activists for a strong, effective and popularly accepted United Nations. We take those positions because there is no way in which we could advance the interests of the people, the majority of whom are poor, outside the context of a strong, effective and popularly accepted United Nations. An autonomous process of globalization, driven by its own internal regularities, can only result in the determination of our future within the parameters set by those who enjoy the superiority of power. The powerful will do this in their own interests, which might not coincide with ours.

When this Organization was established 58 years ago, its objectives and institutions necessarily reflected both the collective global concerns as then perceived and the then balance of power.

Among other things, our esteemed Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, has drawn attention to the fact that the United Nations started off as an Organization of 51 States and is now composed of 191 States. Undoubtedly, the perceived and real collective global concerns of our day are, to some extent at least, different from those that prevailed more than 50 years ago, when the Organization was about a quarter of its present size.

For more than a decade, this Organization has been involved in discussions about its transformation. Once more, the Secretary-General has reflected on this challenge. The truth is that our discussions have gone nowhere. Earlier this morning the Secretary-General announced steps he will take to facilitate the adoption of decisions that will help all of us to effect the necessary and inevitable transformation of the United Nations. We support the decisions he announced.

The global resolve to defeat such organizations as al Qaeda has emerged out of our understanding that international aggression should not necessarily be expected to come from formal and recognized State institutions. We have all come to understand that such a threat coming from non-State institutions would express itself as the most inhumane and despicable terrorism, as was most painfully demonstrated on 11 September 2001.

our collective experience — stretching from New York and elsewhere in the United States on 11 September 2001; and reaching back to Nairobi and Dar es Salaam, in Africa, earlier still; and, more recently, to Bali, Indonesia; to Morocco; to the conflict between Israel and Palestine; to Algeria, India, Russia and elsewhere; and even our own country — tells us that the United Nations, working in defence of the collective interests of the peoples of the world, must ensure that we act together to defeat the threat of terrorism, collectively defined.

At the same time, we have to take on board the conviction among some of our Member States that they constitute special and particular targets of global terrorism. Understandably, the argument is advanced that it would be unreasonable and irrational to expect such States not to act to deter such terrorist actions against themselves. None of us can defend international rules that prescribe that any one of us should wait to be attacked knowing in specific ways that we were going to be attacked by identified terrorists, and then act against those who had attacked us, with such horrendous costs as were experienced by the United States during the 11 September attacks. I do not imagine that any one of us would seek to impose such a costly and unsustainable burden on any of our Member States, which would also violate the self-defence provisions of Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations.

We also have no choice but to deal with the brute reality that the reform process of the United Nations and all its bodies, and other multilateral organizations, has got to recognize the reality of the imbalance of power, as represented by different countries and regions. At the same time, we must proceed from the position that such distribution of power is not necessarily in the interests of the peoples of the world, or even in the interests of those who today have the power to determine what happens to our common world. That includes acceptance of the fact that, depending on the place we occupy in the global community, we have different priorities. Among other things, the rich are concerned about ways and means to maintain the status quo, from which they benefit. In practical terms that means that all matters that threaten to destabilize the status quo must necessarily be anathema to such people. Such matters will therefore be an issue of principal concern to them. Necessarily and understandably, they will then seek to get the rest

of the world to accept their assertion that the maintenance of the status quo must be a universal human preoccupation, precisely the kind of issue on which the United Nations must take a united position.

On the other hand, the poor are interested in changing their conditions for the better. Accordingly, they will not accept the maintenance of the status quo, which perpetuates their poverty. Accordingly, among other things, the poor billions of the world will argue for action by the United Nations to ensure the transfer of resources to themselves, which will enable them to extricate themselves from their condition of poverty and underdevelopment, consistent with the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals, the objectives of the Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development and other international agreements. Inevitably, that will run counter to the propositions of those who are more powerful than the poor, namely, the Governments, peoples and countries that keep them afloat with development assistance. That will require — whether it is stated or not — that the recipients of that assistance understand that such assistance can dry up.

Important shifts in the global balance of power and global objectives have taken place since the United Nations was established, 58 years ago. The Organization has not substantially changed, in terms of its structures and mode of functioning, to reflect those changes. That has served as a recipe for an inevitable crisis, a disaster waiting to occur. And so as we meet today we are confronted by global challenges that the global Organization cannot solve. Impelled by the urgent issues of the day, some of the powerful will not wait for all of us to respond to the problems we have raised, and which they face. They will act to solve those problems; their actions will make the statement that they do not need the United Nations to find solutions to those problems. Simultaneously, that will make the practical statement that the United Nations is irrelevant to the solution of the most pending problems of our day. The disempowered will continue to look to the Organization, understanding, correctly, that they are too weak to advance their interests singly outside the collective voice of the United Nations. In that regard, they expect that the United Nations will be informed by its founding documents and other solemn decisions it has taken since it was established, all of which have been approved by successive sessions of the General Assembly.

Global poverty and underdevelopment are the principal problems that face the United Nations. Billions across the world expect that the General Assembly will address that challenge in a meaningful manner. The masses of people of our world expect that the statements we will make at this session of the General Assembly as representatives of various Governments will indicate a serious commitment to implement what we say. The poor of the world expect an end to violence and war everywhere. They want an end to the killing that is taking too many Israeli and Palestinian lives. They want Africans to stop killing one another, continuing to convey the message that we are incapable of living in peace among ourselves. They desire the realization of the democratic objective universally: that the people shall govern. They believe that we are seriously committed to the objective of the eradication of poverty and the provision of a better life for all. They think that we mean it when we say that we will not allow the process of globalization to result in the further enrichment of the rich and the impoverishment of the poor within and between countries. They believe us when we say that our collective future is one of hope, and not despair. They are keenly interested to know whether our gathering, the United Nations General Assembly, will produce those results.

To collectively meet those requirements will require that each and every one of us — both rich and poor, the powerful and the disempowered — commit ourselves practically to act in all circumstances in a manner that recognizes and respects the fact that none of us is an island sufficient unto ourselves. That includes the most powerful. The latter face the interesting challenge, important to themselves in their national interests, that the poverty and disempowerment of the billions will no longer serve as a condition for their success and their possibility to prosper in conditions of peace.

What we have said today may not be heard, because we do not have the strength to have our voice heard. Tomorrow we may be obliged to say, No more water; the fire next time. As the fires burn, the United Nations will die, consumed by the flames. So will the hopes of the poor of the world die, as they did at Cancun, Mexico, not so long ago. We must act together to say in our words and in our actions, as countries and as the United Nations, that there will be water next time, and not fire.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic South Africa for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Thabo Mbeki, President of the Republic of South Africa, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Stjepan Mesić, President of the Republic of Croatia

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Croatia.

Mr. Stjepan Mesić, President of the Republic of Croatia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Stjepan Mesić, President of the Republic of Croatia, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Mesić (*spoke in Croatian; English text provided by the delegation*): Seldom has the world's attention been so focused on the United Nations; seldom has so much been expected of this Organization. The question now being asked throughout the world is: "Is the United Nations experiencing the deepest crisis in its history, and does it still play a fundamental role in international relations?"

Today, at the beginning of the twenty-first century, the main reason for the existence of our Organization is the same as it was 60 years ago: to maintain world peace, reached at the cost of millions of lives; and to contribute, in an ongoing manner, to the well-being of humankind all over the world.

We live in a world where no one can go it alone, without the help of others, however big and powerful they may be. Global solutions require the concerted and united efforts of all countries and of all the inhabitants of our planet.

Our Organization is a joint effort by the world community that is persistently searching for solutions to the ever-growing problems of our time. I emphasize the phrase "our Organization", for sometimes it seems that we expect the United Nations administration alone to solve our problems. We tend to forget that the

United Nations is not some abstract institution with a will of its own — one that we depend on — but that the United Nations is the will of each and every one of its 191 Member States. We alone are responsible for the will, the decisions, the work and the activities of the United Nations.

There is no doubt whatsoever that the United Nations needs to be reformed. In this connection, Croatia welcomes and fully supports the Secretary-General's September report on the implementation of the Millennium Declaration. When discussing our Organization's reform, especially reform of the Security Council, but also that of the General Assembly, we must be aware that this is a matter of our own political will and readiness to accept change.

Unfortunately, and this should be openly stated, so far there has not been enough political will to move from debates on the subject to actual reform. Croatia is convinced that reform of the Security Council is necessary and should no longer be put off. In fact, we ourselves decided in the Millennium Declaration that we would intensify joint efforts to achieve comprehensive reforms of the Security Council in all its aspects. We have an opportunity to do this at this session of the General Assembly.

Croatia has never been a member of the Security Council. However, in the 1990s Croatia acquired considerable experience in the work of that organ and learned about its good points and its shortcomings, its importance and its true scope. Therefore, unless it adapts to the new realities in international relations, the Council will not be able to maintain its credibility and authority in all parts of the world. What is required is adherence to the principle of equitable representation of all United Nations Members in the Security Council.

Croatia is prepared further to intensify its activities as an active promoter of regional and world peace. With this in mind, Croatia has presented its candidacy for membership in the Security Council for the 2008-2009 mandate. Croatia's membership in the Security Council would represent a great tribute to my country and a recognition of all that has been achieved in bringing peace to South-eastern Europe, which has found the strength, after many years of war, to embrace the path of good-neighbourly relations.

The fight against international terrorism is high on Croatia's list of priorities. Two years after the 11 September terrorist attacks on the United States, we

stand firmly by our American allies and all those who refuse to accept terror, fanaticism and killing as a means of resolving problems between peoples and countries. Our collective duty to maintain international peace and security, which stems from the Charter of the United Nations, provides an international framework for a decisive response to terrorism in the twenty-first century.

Croatia's forces are participating in bringing peace and stability to Afghanistan. Croatia is aware of the fact that concerted action by all democratic countries is the best response to terrorism. The fight against terrorism requires not only action by the democratic coalition at a global level, but also that of each of its members at the national and regional levels. It is equally important that we intensify our activities to assist countries lagging behind in economic development and other areas. Inequality, injustice and ignorance are fertile breeding grounds for the seeds of terrorism.

Croatia is still dealing with the consequences of the war imposed on it and does not have the economic resources to participate as a donor in the action for the reconstruction of Iraq. However, Croatia stands ready to offer its wealth of experience in post-war reconstruction, especially in construction work, as well as the knowledge and operative capacities required for dealing with post-war confidence-building, strengthening the country's stability, normalizing life, and mending the tears left by the war in the fabric of civil society. I am thinking in particular of the knowledge and experience acquired in civil police training and activities.

Events in the Middle East confirm that greater courage is required to reach a compromise and ensure coexistence than to wage battles; Croatia knows this all too well. We are also aware of the importance of timely resolutions of the Security Council and General Assembly, which must be fine-tuned to meet the challenges and needs of the peace process, keeping abreast of realities in the field and encouraging a greatly needed agreement. We hope that in its forthcoming work the General Assembly will take this into account when adopting new resolutions on the Middle East.

The importance of United Nations peacekeeping operations has been recognized on many occasions. The mandate and character of peacekeeping operations

have been significantly transformed, from operations aimed primarily at disengaging warring parties into complex missions for building democratic systems, protecting and promoting human rights, strengthening civil society and establishing the groundwork for the sustainable development of independent States.

This complexity, and the frequent overlapping of mandates, requires a high degree of expertise in various areas: from holding democratic elections and developing judicial systems to establishing police and military forces that meet international standards and basic international legal regulations.

The United Nations is the only global institution that can respond to the challenges of simultaneously establishing regional stability, introducing post-war reconstruction and building a democratic society.

The United Nations has paid a high price in its peace efforts. I would like to take this occasion to once again express Croatia's condolences to the families of the victims of the recent barbaric attacks on United Nations headquarters in Baghdad, and to re-emphasize that such attacks strengthen our belief that the development of collective security systems and global solidarity must continue.

Croatia is currently participating in five United Nations peacekeeping missions — in Ethiopia and Eritrea, India and Pakistan, Sierra Leone, Timor-Leste and Western Sahara.

We are determined to further intensify our participation in United Nations peacekeeping missions, in line with our physical and financial capabilities regarding the composition and number of troops deployed, as well as theatres of operation. Croatia feels that as a country that received United Nations peacekeeping forces at a time when its sovereignty and territorial integrity were attacked, and as a country which hosted one of the United Nations most extensive operations, it now has a moral obligation to contribute this experience to securing peace and prosperity in other parts of the world.

I would particularly like to stress the importance of closer cooperation between the Security Council and troop contributing countries. We welcome the positive changes that have so far occurred in this respect. It is also important to ensure the necessary exchange of views between the Security Council and the countries

on whose territory the peacekeeping operations are being conducted. This is not only a question of due respect of those countries' sovereignty, but it is also a way of acquiring full insight into its needs and priorities.

I also believe that there is the need for the establishment of closer links and better coordination in the work of the United Nations main bodies, especially between the Economic and Social Council and the Security Council. The Economic and Social Council and its commissions possess exceptional knowledge and experience important for the building of post-conflict societies, something we were able to see for ourselves last year when Croatia presided over this body. The establishment of working groups for Guinea-Bissau and for Burundi were steps in the right direction, and we hope that this experience will be used to further the involvement of the Economic and Social Council in processes of maintaining and building peace.

The Millennium Declaration, this joint vision of all United Nations members for a more just and better world, is a beacon we must follow. Not only must we follow it, we must ensure that its goals are fully implemented. In this context, Croatia would like to see the Economic and Social Council play a greater role in the general implementation of the Millennium Declaration. Therefore, Croatia supports the idea of a high-level dialogue on the achievement of the Goals set out in the Millennium Declaration taking place at the next General Assembly session.

As a member of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights, Croatia supports the universal ratification of international instruments in the field of human rights. The Commission should continue unhindered in its activities while carrying out its mandate. In an effort to promote and protect the human rights of all people, Croatia is devoting special attention to the human rights of women, children, refugees and disabled persons, and to the human rights of members of national minorities.

Although much has been done in the past period to improve the position of women in society and promote principles of gender equality, the international community still has an obligation to intensify efforts to prevent all forms of violence against women, and must try to include women in decision-making processes, ensuring empowerment of women at all levels. Against this background I am proud to say that Croatia has

provided the first woman participant in the United Nations Military Observer Group in India and Pakistan.

Apart from terrorism, one of the biggest security threats in the world is the proliferation of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction. The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty is, we believe, particularly important in ensuring that the goal of nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament is attained. We are concerned by the fact that although the Treaty was opened for signature and ratification seven years ago, it still has not entered into force. The universal character of this Treaty is of great significance and we call on all States that have not acceded to the Treaty to do so as soon as possible.

Croatia welcomes the efforts of the Secretary-General and the United Nations to raise the level of awareness throughout the world of the importance of the rule of law and of acceding to international instruments in this area. As a member State of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, Croatia has actively participated in the pioneering endeavour of setting up a new international order symbolized by the International Criminal Court, which has rightly been termed the embodiment of our collective conscience.

Croatia is firmly set on the path of accession to the European Union. Croatia, whose strategic national goal is to join the European Union, remains dedicated to the continual promotion of friendly relations with all its neighbours and to the policy of open borders, allowing the flow of people, goods and services, but also to that of keeping its borders firmly closed to all forms of transnational crime and illegal migration.

Croatia will continue to actively participate in regional, European and worldwide initiatives and organizations, respecting all its international obligations. For us, the United Nations remains a central point for resolving problems in international relations and for promoting the interests of mankind. I am certain that this year's General Assembly session will reconfirm the importance of the United Nations and open a new chapter in our organization's activities in building peace and security.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Croatia for the statement just made.

Mr. Stjepan Mesić, President of the Republic of Croatia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by His Majesty King Mohammed VI of Morocco

The Acting President: The Assembly will hear an address by His Majesty King Mohammed VI of Morocco.

King Mohammed VI of Morocco was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Majesty King Mohammed VI of Morocco, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

King Mohammed VI (Morocco) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like first of all to congratulate you, Sir, on being unanimously elected to chair the fifty-eighth session of the United Nations General Assembly. On behalf of the Kingdom of Morocco and of the Group of 77 and China, I wish to assure you of our full support for making a success of this important session.

Realizing what a delicate phase our Organization is going through, many heads of State and Government have accepted the invitation extended to them by Mr. Kofi Annan, the United Nations Secretary-General. I should like to take this opportunity to express my appreciation to him, once again, for the relentless efforts he is making to shore up the efficiency of the Organization.

This is an emotionally charged moment for me, as I stand on this prestigious rostrum and recall the appeal and initiatives launched by my late grandfather and father, Their Majesties King Mohammed V and King Hassan II, urging concerted action by the international community to speed up decolonization, especially in the Arab Maghreb and on the African continent, and to uphold the principles of peace, coexistence, openness and tolerance.

What we have done, at the international level, has always been guided by the same ideals that inspired the founders of our Organization. It seeks to contribute to the significant cultural accomplishments made by mankind thanks to this institution, to preserve human dignity, and to ensure equality in rights and obligations, not only between men and women, but also among nations, large and small, in full respect of international legality, and in a spirit of freedom and solidarity.

We certainly value the positive and concrete achievements of the Organization. However, in keeping with our firm commitment to its noble mission, we ask ourselves: to what extent has the Organization managed to make peace prevail and to contribute significantly to sustainable development and to the settlement of conflicts arising, more often than not, from colonization, which tore apart entire peoples and nations, especially across our African continent?

Moreover, I should like to assure our brothers and sisters from African States of Morocco's constant and unwavering solidarity as well as of its determination to further expand cooperation with them on political, economic, social and security matters and to support constructive African initiatives. In that context, the international community is called upon to provide tangible support to the African strategy, the New Partnership for Africa's Development, which targets the sustainable development of the African continent, mostly through interaction on the part of its sub-regional entities.

The Millennium Declaration marked a turning point in carrying out the mission unanimously entrusted to the United Nations in the area of sustainable development. Indeed, for the first time, heads of State and Government agreed on specific objectives and targets in the social, economic and educational fields up to the year 2015. As early as January this year, I made a point of assigning to the Chair of the Group of 77 and China the priority task of ensuring follow-up to those commitments and monitoring their integrated implementation. On our Group's initiative, the General Assembly unanimously adopted a resolution to that effect last June, pending a global assessment in 2005.

Although the Group of 77 and China has sought to keep development issues high on the Organization's agenda, one must admit that the main thrust of our efforts has focused on the serious threats posed to world peace in the Middle East region. Despite the efforts undertaken for the settlement of the Palestinian question — whether by the United Nations or by the international Quartet, through the road map — the logic of violence and intransigence continues to hamper the restoration of peace. The sufferings, deprivations and injustices endured daily by the brotherly Palestinian people call for stronger commitment on the part of the international community

to achieving irreversible implementation of the road map.

As Chairman of the al-Quds Committee, I wish to say that I am fully prepared to help to find a just and final solution leading to the establishment of a viable Palestinian State with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital, living side by side with the State of Israel, in a just, comprehensive and lasting peace. With the settlement of that issue — which is contingent upon the withdrawal of Israel from all occupied Arab territories — the region will regain its original status as a land of religious and cultural coexistence.

Similarly, Morocco calls for concerted international action that would enable the brotherly Iraqi people to live in security, stability and freedom and to rebuild their country, while ensuring that their choices are fully respected and that their State's sovereignty, national unity and territorial integrity are preserved.

The Mediterranean region is particularly affected by the crises I have just mentioned. We therefore believe that the Euro-Mediterranean dialogue is an element that is key for the region's stability, security and development. In that context, the Kingdom of Morocco has made the strategic choice of opting for the construction of the Arab Maghreb as a region where peace and development may be fostered for the benefit of its members, where there must be no tendency towards balkanization and where the fundamental national attributes of each Member State are fully respected.

The Kingdom of Morocco, guided by that Maghreban ideal and committed to safeguarding its good-neighbourly relations, has agreed to ease the tension fomented on its borders and is endeavouring in all good faith to find an international consensus on the issue of the Moroccan Sahara. The attempts that have been made thus far to reach a solution show that the only way to resolve the issue once and for all is to come up with a realistic and final political solution in keeping with democratic principles, while fully respecting the Kingdom of Morocco's sovereignty and territorial integrity, as the United Nations itself recommended in June 2001. In that connection, I should like once more to officially proclaim Morocco's pledge to cooperate with the United Nations to bring about such a political solution.

Ever since the tragic events of 11 September, the international community has been involved in a resolute fight against international terrorism, which poses a threat to mankind's most sacred values. Last May, the Moroccan nation was itself the target of the odious plague of terrorism in a desperate attempt to challenge the democratic model that Morocco has chosen and to undermine its strong commitment to the values of freedom, tolerance and openness. We should therefore like to insist on the need for intensified international cooperation to eradicate this scourge.

Here, I should like to strongly denounce the confusion deliberately created by those who persistently associate terrorism with Islam, thus choosing to ignore the fact that Islam advocates peace and respect for human life and flatly rejects injustice and aggression.

The United Nations system is now confronted with a deeply troubled international environment and faces new and major challenges. If the United Nations is to play its role as the sole regulator of relations between and among States, it is imperative that we restore to the concept of universalism its original meaning: the obligation shared by all to comply with the same ethics and rules of law and with effective solidarity among all peoples and nations. To attain that objective, mankind must find new reasons to rekindle hope. We must also have faith and confidence in the United Nations to help it recover its standing and its effectiveness. Let us therefore make a common pledge to build up its resources and to strengthen its action. The Assembly may count on the help and support of the King of Morocco so that, together, we may build a safer, more equitable and more humane world.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the King of Morocco for the statement he has just made.

His Majesty Mohammed VI, King of Morocco, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Agenda item 9 (continued)

General debate

Address by His Excellency Mr. Silvio Berlusconi, President of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Italy

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Italy.

Mr. Silvio Berlusconi, President of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Italy, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Silvio Berlusconi, President of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Italy, and invite him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Berlusconi (*spoke in Italian; English text provided by the delegation*): I have the honour to address the fifty-eighth session of the General Assembly on behalf of the European Union, over which Italy presides until 31 December 2003. The associated countries, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, the Slovak Republic and Slovenia, align themselves with this statement.

On this occasion, I cannot forget the sacrifice of Sergio Vieira de Mello and the other United Nations officials who recently fell victim to blind, indiscriminate hatred in Baghdad. Allow me also to pay a tribute to the memory of the Foreign Minister of Sweden, Anna Lindh, the victim of a brutal act of violence. In their memory and in the memory of all those who gave their lives in the service of freedom, democracy and human rights, the European Union pays a heartfelt tribute.

Two weeks ago, we commemorated the second anniversary of 11 September. The European Union remembers with great sorrow the victims of those attacks, when the horror of terrorism struck this city, the United States and the world.

The European Union welcomes the Secretary-General's recent report on the implementation of the development goals indicated in the United Nations Millennium Declaration and its conclusions. We share his view that the multilateral institutions should be

updated and strengthened, and we are ready to contribute actively to the goal of building an international order based on effective multilateral institutions and within the fundamental framework of the Charter.

We are all convinced that two of the greatest threats to peace and security today are terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

The European Union condemns all acts of terrorism, which are threats to democracy, human rights and economic and social development. We must be firm in our determination to destroy this virus and free present and future generations from its attacks. Efforts to combat terrorism must respect human rights and the fundamental freedoms, the rule of law and humanitarian law.

In this struggle, we are working in close collaboration with and give our full support to the United Nations. It is a battle that must be conducted for the sake of freedom and democracy — the universal values enshrined in the Charter, which should be deeply rooted in the lives of all the peoples of this globalized world.

We must show the same commitment to stop the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their vectors. We cannot shirk our responsibilities. The European Union has doubled its efforts to put an end to this threat to international peace and security. After having recently agreed to an action plan, we are now busy with its implementation. Universal subscription to the main multilateral agreements is at the heart of the European Union's policies.

World peace and security are indivisible. The peoples of Europe are well aware of the need to address both the military and the humanitarian aspects of the North Korean situation. The European Union is closely watching the six-party talks aimed at resolving the current crisis relative to North Korea's nuclear programme. The European Union sends a firm appeal to North Korea to completely dismantle its nuclear programme in a prompt transparent, verifiable and irreversible manner, in compliance with the obligations deriving from international non-proliferation agreements.

The European Union reiterates its request to India and Pakistan to adhere to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and to act in

compliance with Security Council resolution 1172 (1998). We forcefully encourage India and Pakistan to pursue a process of political dialogue that will lead to an agreement that is satisfactory to all the parties on all the controversial points, including Kashmir: a problem that cannot be resolved through violence or terrorism.

The European Union expresses its growing concern over the development of the Iranian nuclear programme and the risks of proliferation that it involves. We reiterate our expectation that Iran will demonstrate accelerated cooperation and full transparency with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) by acceding to its requests. Urgent and unconditional acceptance, signature and the implementation of an IAEA additional protocol on safeguards are of the utmost importance. The international community would consider it a sign of Iran's commitment to the non-proliferation framework and a step toward the desired reforms.

The non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction is a priority. It requires constant political pressure and the use of every political and diplomatic instrument available as the first line of defence. We cannot allow weapons of mass destruction to end up in the hands of terrorists or regimes that represent a threat to world peace.

In that context, another grave danger is represented by the increasing spread of light and portable weapons and by the expansion of armed organized violence, whose toll in human lives has begun to exceed the lives lost in wars.

With regard to non-proliferation, the European Union is firmly committed to supporting the United Nations, particularly the Security Council, in pursuit of the following common objectives: strengthening international agreements; increasing support for the monitoring agencies; and intensifying controls over illegal trafficking. Finally, should all political and diplomatic measures fail, recourse to coercive measures provided for by the Charter cannot be ruled out.

However, recourse to force can be avoided if all the instruments of international law, including human rights safeguards, come to prevail in all their effects. We are all persuaded that that is the proper thing to do.

To that end, the European Union considers the International Criminal Court a new instrument with

great powers of deterrence and reiterates its full support for the Court and its universalization.

The EU is and will always remain committed to the promotion and protection of all human rights and all fundamental freedoms. In that context, we reiterate our strong support for achieving universal abolition of the death penalty. In recent years, important progress has been made in that direction, thanks in part to civil society. Abolition is our primary goal. Where capital punishment continues to exist, however, we are requesting that its application be impeded through a general moratorium on executions.

Conflict prevention and crisis management are essential components of the EU's contribution to safeguarding international peace and security. More than 40,000 men and women of the European Union are currently deployed on United Nations-led or -authorized peace operations in the world.

The Union is directly involved in missions in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and, until a few days ago, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where it demonstrated its will to contribute to the international community's efforts to restore peace and stability in Africa, including by military means.

In light of this concrete commitment, the European Union reaffirms its support for reforming and strengthening United Nations peacekeeping activities.

The decision by the Council of the European Union to strengthen cooperation between the European Union and the United Nations in the area of crisis management reaffirms the Union's strategic relations with the Organization. The Union is now drafting guidelines on the protection of civilians in Union-led peacekeeping operations that will fully reflect United Nations principles.

Democracy is the only system of government that can fully guarantee respect for human rights while fostering development, prosperity and peace. The European Union plans to increase cooperation with countries that share the values of freedom and democracy. In a spirit of openness towards the entire international community, the European Union states its willingness to give support to all States that intend to comply with those principles.

The European Union continues to consider its relations with Africa a priority and recalls the common

commitment to strengthen this dialogue. The European Union has expressed a special interest in strengthening African peacekeeping and conflict-resolution capacities, and has also targeted its initiatives in those fields on Africa. We are committed to supporting the efforts of the African Union to establish a regional security mechanism.

The European Union will continue to work for inter-African peace and will support the efforts of African States to end the many conflicts that afflict the continent. Stable conditions for peace cannot be created, however, without a strategy to eradicate the causes of poverty and the social exclusion that fuel so many conflicts in Africa and other regions of the world.

On the long road towards managing globalization and spreading its benefits to all, Europe will remain firmly committed to Africa, and the European Union's privileged partnership with African countries shall continue. In this framework, we reiterate our support for the New Partnership for Africa's Development and for the hopes that it represents for African development.

The European Union's special commitment to Africa should also be seen in the framework of the Millennium Development Goals, primarily designed to eradicate poverty, hunger, disease, social and gender inequality and environmental degradation. In this regard, we reaffirm our commitment to fight AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria with a view to eradicating them.

The European Union expresses its deep regret over the failure to achieve substantial progress at the Cancun Conference organized by the World Trade Organization (WTO), especially with regard to agricultural products. We remain convinced that increased liberalization of world trade, together with development cooperation activities, can play a crucial role in achieving the Millennium Development Goals for a better world. This is why the European Union believes that it is important to continue the negotiations in the WTO framework with the determination and flexibility needed to honour the commitments enshrined in the Doha Development Agenda.

The European Union has made a financial commitment, in line with the Monterrey objectives, to increase official development assistance to 0.39 per cent of gross national product by 2006.

Our commitment does not stop at financial contributions. We also intend to join our development partners in a process that integrates the fight against poverty and disease with progress in the field of safeguarding human rights and fundamental freedoms, good governance and environmental protection. The protection of our environment, including through implementing the commitments undertaken by signing the Kyoto Protocol, is the benchmark of our ability to foster sustainable development that reconciles the demands of economic and social progress with the need to protect natural resources. Those two goals are not alternatives but rather the pillars of the Johannesburg Declaration.

The European Union appreciates the progress made since the fifty-seventh session of the General Assembly following the presentation of the Secretary-General's report on reform, "Strengthening of the United Nations: an agenda for further change" (A/57/387 and Corr.1). It continues to support the Secretary-General's efforts to implement the reforms needed to bring about efficient management capable of achieving the objectives established for the United Nations by the international community. We will work for the adoption of a budget plan for the 2004-2005 biennium that supports the implementation of the Millennium Declaration and the reform process begun during the Assembly's fifty-seventh session.

Safeguarding international peace and security requires a strong commitment to address regional conflicts. A lack of such a commitment could entail increased destabilization, to the detriment of the entire international community.

In the Middle East, the European Union is deeply concerned by the deterioration of relations between the State of Israel and the Palestinian Authority and reiterates its strong support for the road map, the only hope for lasting peace and for paving the way towards stability and development in the region. The European Union will lend its efforts to this end within the Quartet. To implement the road map, it is also important that the European Union and the Group of Eight countries have a specific and generous commitment to a plan for the comprehensive economic reconstruction of the area. Both Israel and the Palestinian Authority must act urgently to implement the commitments contained in the road map.

In Iraq, the European Union has welcomed the end of Saddam Hussain's regime, whose power was built on fear and the violation of human rights. The formation of the Iraqi Governing Council was the first major step towards a representative government of the Iraqi people. The European Union stresses the importance of the restoration of Iraqi sovereignty and the establishment of a fully representative Iraqi Government through democratic elections. The United Nations has a vital role in this process. The upcoming donors conference in Madrid provides a welcome opportunity for all those who share our concern for Iraq's future to make a positive contribution to the political and economic regeneration of Iraq. We recognize that, for the reconstruction process to be successful, it will need to be accompanied by improvements in the security situation.

In Afghanistan, the European Union wishes to express its full appreciation for the work done by the United Nations within the framework of the Bonn process.

We will continue to assure our support for the process of democratization also through assistance to the reconstruction of the country. The European Union underlines the importance of an effective reform in the area of security as the basis for lasting security and stability in Afghanistan and throughout the region. The preparations for the 2004 elections to choose a government and parliament that are representative of all components of Afghan society are of primary importance.

In accordance with the conclusions of the European Council of Thessaloniki, the European Union will continue to work tirelessly in support of the Secretary-General's efforts to achieve a comprehensive, just, viable and functional solution to the Cyprus problem, consistent with the relevant Security Council resolutions.

Relations between the countries of Europe and Latin America are rooted in history and provide the basis for intense collaboration and for the European Union's strong interest in the region. The European Union is committed to further improving the overall arrangements of its relations with the countries of Central and South America.

Lastly, the European Union will continue to support the processes of stabilization, democratization and development in the western Balkans. At the

European Union-Balkan Summit in Thessaloniki, the European Union reaffirmed its full consensus on the future European perspective of the region. The realization of those hopes will depend on the ability of the individual countries in the region to implement institutional, governmental and economic reforms, and on the fulfilment of the political criteria of the European Union, including full cooperation with the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia and progress in the field of respect for the rights of minorities.

The events of recent decades have profoundly changed the world order. Today the conditions exist for the democracies of the world to unite in order to spread those values that are the unavoidable premise for all others: freedom and democracy.

In the Millennium Declaration we promised food, water, health and education to the greatest possible

number of citizens. Now the democracies must commit themselves to providing, also and above all, the intangible values from which the other, more tangible ones spring, because without the prerequisites of freedom and democracy there can be no hope for lasting peace and development, nor can there be an ultimate defeat of the challenge of poverty.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Italy for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Silvio Berlusconi, President of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Italy, was escorted from the rostrum.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in the general debate for this meeting.

The meeting rose at 2.05 p.m.



General Assembly

Fifty-eighth session

8th plenary meeting

Tuesday, 23 September 2003, 3 p.m.

New York

Official Records

President: The Hon. Julian R. Hunte (Saint Lucia)

In the absence of the President, Mrs. Veiga (Cape Verde), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Address by Mrs. Vaira Vike-Freiberga, President of the Republic of Latvia

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will first hear an address by the President of the Republic of Latvia.

Mrs. Vaira Vike-Freiberga, President of the Republic of Latvia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations Her Excellency Mrs. Vaira Vike-Freiberga, President of the Republic of Latvia. I invite her to address the Assembly.

President Vike-Freiberga: I would like to begin by extending Latvia's heartfelt congratulations to Mr. Julian Hunte on his appointment as President of the United Nations General Assembly. Latvia highly values his extensive experience and is confident that he will succeed in his efforts to hasten the pace of reforms within the Assembly. I am pleased that a broad consensus on the main goals of these reforms was achieved during the previous session, and I wish him success in his responsible duties.

Three days ago, the people of Latvia made a historical decision that will influence their country's

course of development over the next foreseeable decades, or even centuries. On 20 September 2003, the people of Latvia decided, in a referendum, to join the European Union. In voting for accession to this influential body of free and democratic nations, my country became the last of 10 candidate States to confirm its commitment to a strong and united Europe and to the extension of a growing family of secure and prosperous nations.

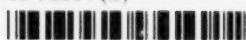
It is our hope that this extended Union of 25 member States will serve not only to promote the welfare of its citizens, but also to become an even more significant contributor to international stability and worldwide prosperity. The European Union is already the world's largest provider of development assistance and Latvia looks forward to undertaking the responsibilities and commitments that this entails. This includes taking an active part in the formulation of priorities to ensure that the assistance provided by the European Union reaches those who need it most.

Latvia and her Baltic neighbours reappeared on the international stage only twelve short years ago, following half a century of totalitarian rule under Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia. Our success story of rebirth and renewal testifies to the fact that through hard work and dedicated effort the re-establishment of democratic societies and functioning market economies can be realized within a relatively short period of time.

Many other nations in transition are now undertaking similar paths of development and reform. Latvia is already sharing its experiences with other

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developing countries, and will continue to do so in the future.

Twelve years ago, when Latvia became a member of the United Nations, the Soviet Union was in the process of breaking up and the Cold War was coming to an end. As the threat of a nuclear conflagration between two mutually hostile superpowers receded, new challenges to world security were coming to the fore, and older ones were showing no sign of going away.

Perhaps humanity's greatest problem lies in its propensity for violence, which manifests itself in all levels of society, starting with the abusive individual in the family household and ending in armed conflict in the international arena. Even peaceful countries with lengthy traditions of non-intervention and domestic tranquillity are finding themselves faced with tragic acts of senseless violence that include the beating and killing of immigrants and political assassinations.

The unrest and turmoil in the Middle East, which has lasted for well over five decades, shows no sign of abating and can only come to an end once violence is firmly forsaken as a means for obtaining political ends. Latvia views the road map for peace, which foresees a free and secure State of Israel living in peace alongside an independent Palestinian State as the only feasible means for ending the dangerous impasse that both sides have now reached. The alternative is a continuing escalation of bloodshed, a never-ending cycle of killing and mounting mutual hostility.

Latvia is ready to promote the establishment of a lasting peace in the region, under the auspices of both the United Nations and the European Union. We encourage the interested parties to do everything within their means to de-escalate tensions and put the peace process back on track.

The establishment of a genuine and lasting peace between the Israelis and the Palestinians would also have an additional benefit. It would remove the Palestinian cause as an excuse for terrorists to justify their actions of murder and destruction. As the events of the last few years so poignantly reveal, terrorism and arms proliferation have become two of the largest threats to world security today.

Currently, the international community is deeply divided about the ethics and feasibility of implementing direct military action against

Governments that are deemed to support and sponsor terrorism. In the case of Afghanistan and Iraq, where undeniably repressive regimes were removed by force through outside intervention, the military measures undertaken by the United States and its allies will have to be followed by comprehensive international efforts to help those countries rebuild their societies and their economies. I am certain that most of us would agree on the need for reconstruction and security regardless of our opinion about the foreign military presence in these two countries.

Within the limited means at its disposal, Latvia has sent humanitarian assistance and military medical personnel to Afghanistan and has dispatched a military contingent to help maintain order in post-war Iraq.

As we collectively seek to avoid a clash of civilizations between different societies in the world, so we must seek to reduce the growing discrepancies between the rich and the poor. Poverty afflicts every single member country of the United Nations. About three billion people, or half the world's population, struggle to subsist on the equivalent of less than two dollars a day. Seventy per cent of the world's poorest people live in rural areas and depend on agriculture for their subsistence. The Millennium Goal of reducing poverty and of halving the proportion of people earning less than one dollar a day can be achieved only by improving the plight of poor farmers and creating viable agricultural communities. Poor farmers in developing countries cannot compete with products subsidized by the treasuries of the world's richest countries.

At this month's World Trade Organization (WTO) Ministerial Conference in Cancun, Mexico, United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan urged the WTO member States to say no to trade policies that aggravate poverty and to say yes to bold and sensible steps that will revive the global economy and set the new course for development.

Poverty also provides fertile ground for modern-day slavery and the trafficking of humans, which continues to occur in nearly all regions of the globe. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, an estimated 27 million people are still being bought, sold, held captive, brutalized and exploited for profit. Together with non-governmental organizations that are working to stop slavery, and through international organizations

such as the United Nations, our Governments must help those slaves break free from their chains.

We all live in a world where such deadly diseases as HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria and, lately, SARS, to name a few, know no borders. It is only through the continued vigilance of our countries' health officials and through close international cooperation that we will ever be able to keep those mortal dangers in check. I hope that yesterday's AIDS conference has strengthened the resolve and confidence of participants to overcome this great affliction.

The Government of Latvia is actively pursuing its commitments under the Millennium Declaration to attain the Millennium Development Goals. For example, it has prepared a national action plan to address the needs of children in consultation with local authorities, non-governmental organizations and the children themselves. In cooperation with the United Nations Development Programme office in Riga, it has also established a working group that is devoting particular attention to the reduction of child mortality and the improvement of mothers' health.

During the twentieth century, mankind inflicted more environmental damage on our planet than during all of the previous centuries combined. If we do not devote greater efforts to reducing environmental pollution, including greenhouse gas emissions, then future generations stand to inherit a planet with increasingly destructive climate change and with a forest cover that is restricted to scattered nature reserves. We must avoid reaching the stage at which the Earth's energy and food resources become irreversibly depleted. People and Governments must be willing to make difficult economic sacrifices for the sake of a cleaner environment.

Since its foundation in 1945, the United Nations has seen the number of its Member States increase almost fourfold. It has seen European colonialism, the Cold War and apartheid come to an end. It has successfully brokered the cessation of hostilities in Cyprus, East Timor and other countries. It has provided trillions of dollars of development assistance to numerous countries. Latvia believes that the United Nations should remain the principal world body for the mediation of international disputes and for the formulation of universal rules of conduct that all abide by.

However, the United Nations has also been criticized for being slow, unwieldy and ineffectual. Few would disagree that it has reached a point where changes within its structure are required so that it can effectively deal with the new challenges of the twenty-first century. Let us recall that a working group on the reform of the Security Council was created already ten years ago, shortly after the collapse of the bipolar world that had dominated international relations for decades. At that time there were hopes that an unprecedented degree of unity might be reached within the United Nations community. For the moment, however, it appears that any substantial changes within the United Nations will have to await a renewed climate of consensus, which is not likely to precede the resolution of the crisis in the Middle East, the settling of trade disputes and the establishment of greater unity about agricultural subsidies, arms proliferation and environmental issues.

Latvia firmly believes in the universal ideals that this Organization embodies and is ready, within the limited means at its disposal, to contribute to their realization. The United Nations presents our 191 Member States with the unique opportunity to work together for the benefit of humanity. Let us hope that our efforts will be coordinated and constructive, so that we may make the twenty-first century one of security, peace, and continued development.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I would like to thank the President of the Republic of Latvia for the statement she has just made.

Mrs. Vaira Vike-Freiberga, President of the Republic of Latvia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Nicanor Duarte Frutos, President of the Republic of Paraguay

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Paraguay.

Mr. Nicanor Duarte Frutos, President of the Republic of Paraguay, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, it is my honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency

Mr. Nicanor Duarte Frutos, President of the Republic of Paraguay, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Duarte Frutos (*spoke in Spanish*): Two hundred years after the first cry of freedom in Latin America, our peoples are propelled by new winds of emancipation. A fresh generation of leaders has taken up the old flags of our heroes to demand real global interdependence through an economic order inspired by solidarity and by the building of a lasting peace.

I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, for the commendable work that he has done to uphold and promote the principles that were enshrined in the Charter 58 years ago.

For too long, Latin America had been on the margins of history. It had been reduced to playing the part of providing inexpensive labour and raw materials to more developed economies, while its most brilliant minds were lured away and absorbed by large urban markets. Our region has also fallen victim to mercenaries, soldiers of fortune and heartless people representing dehumanizing and destructive transnational corporations that overthrew Governments, provoked wars between friendly countries and squandered our countries' resources.

Nevertheless, we are not here to complain about those ignominious days. Nor are we here to cling to the glories of the past. On the contrary, we have come to express our firm will to work together for a dignified present and a secure future for those who are now dying from hunger, thirst, cold and easily preventable and treatable diseases. Our voices today arise from our roots, cultures and traditions, and proclaim a Latin America that is integrated into the world, with a fresh sense of fraternity, to make the lives of our peoples more humane and enriching.

We must seek a multipolar world in which cultures enhance rather than confront one another and regional production promotes peace and prosperity in the world to save present and future generations from the terrible scourge of new major conflicts. Let us make a renewed commitment, without scepticism and with the intrinsic dignity that God has bestowed on every human being.

In Paraguay, a small but dignified country, we are making a major effort at capacity-building with respect

to national and international communities. A *sine qua non* is to revive production, attract investors back and sell our products on world markets.

Although our peoples have suffered long years of recession and deprivation because of the foreign debt burden, my Government has managed to redirect public resources towards education and to coordinate the efforts of civil society and the State to democratize young people's access to the world of knowledge. Only effective human capital, with ethical principles, will enable us to survive and grow in a climate of globalization. Towards that end, we fervently hope for a globalization that involves not simply economics but also justice, science, technology and development. Our challenge is to achieve global progress.

I come from an island surrounded by land, as Paraguay's renowned writer Augusto Roa Bastos so aptly described the country. But with the advent of democracy, to the credit of the people's self-sacrifice, our country has restored its identity, memories and dreams. We Paraguayans accept our geographical disadvantage as an opportunity to be creative and industrious, as our development requires. For this reason, we appeal for international solidarity to help to implement the plan of action of Almaty, which is designed to overcome the limitations of landlocked developing countries, including Paraguay.

We have a strong ethical belief in this historic objective. The inequality that impoverishes most of the world is immoral. There is not a trace of Christianity in the lack of solidarity with the destitute. In that regard, the individual must be treated as a whole person, so that he may in turn bring well-being to his family, for the sake of all society. If leaders do not provide a moral example, it will not be possible to advance towards a democracy that is embraced by the people and fosters true participation in a society that is distinguished by its moral capital, the essential basis of a humanistic and humanizing economy. A world in crisis requires humanism, not humanitarianism. The world seeks solidarity, and not mere charity.

We must understand that the impoverishment of a large share of humankind jeopardizes world balance. It is true that many countries have become impoverished not simply as a result of outside influences but also because of corruption and impunity on the part of local leaders. But it is equally true that without an ethical belief in the international order and the strong will of

leaders to praise God and renounce historical patterns of greed of rich countries, the world that we leave to our children will not be fit for living.

Unfortunately, while we are shaping a future based on ideals and utopias in this hallowed chamber of world peace, we have not figured out how to end war, since in various parts of the world the arms race continues, as does growing poverty. It bears repeating that, as leaders of our respective countries, we must cease speaking in terms of friends and enemies, which has a weakening and destructive effect. We must use that energy and those resources to ensure just social development in economically less-developed countries. Without pluralistic and equitable participation in crucial international policy decisions discussed here in our Organization and a commitment to multilateralism, the United Nations and, in particular, the Security Council, will inevitably fail in its noble objective of maintaining peace in the world.

In this context, Paraguay supports the aspirations of Latin America and other continents to be represented in the Security Council, where the presence of Brazil as a permanent member would fulfil the great and legitimate interests of our region.

Paraguay would like to reiterate here its full support for the efforts and aspirations of the Republic of China on Taiwan to become a fully-fledged member of the international community through the United Nations. In this regard, we appeal to the principles of universality contained in the Charter so that this long-overdue and heartfelt desire of the sister Republic of China on Taiwan may be fulfilled.

As I said some weeks ago in my own country — and as I reaffirm here — the ethics of fraternity and mutual respect must govern international relations today if humanity is to make progress towards lasting peace inspired by the rule of law and reason.

With the same vigour with which we advocate worldwide peace, we condemn terrorism in all its manifestations and sources. In Paraguay, we have pledged — a pledge we are resolutely fulfilling — to combat the breeding grounds of terrorism and its financial support, drug trafficking. We shall not deviate from that commitment. Likewise, we energetically denounce the terrorist action against the United Nations headquarters in Baghdad that occurred yesterday and that of 19 August. We mourn the death of outstanding United Nations staff members, including

the distinguished Brazilian and Latin American citizen, Mr. Sergio Vieira de Mello, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. In that same line of action, in Paraguay we are dismantling organized crime and money-laundering, regardless of who promotes, conceals or commits those crimes.

I reiterate that our country will no longer be a bridge, corridor or end point for such criminal operations. With the same energy with which we combat crime and illegality, we reaffirm our unwavering commitment to respecting human rights, which is an increasingly important part of our domestic and foreign policies, promoting full enjoyment of public and individual freedoms for the peoples of the world.

The fight for freedom, democracy, social equity and world peace will be of no avail if we do not more responsibly face the challenges for the preservation of our environment. Let us seek the well-being of our peoples today but not forget that our children will live on this planet tomorrow. In Paraguay and Latin America, we are determined to be the protagonists and architects of a shared destiny of responsibility, justice and equality.

Finally, may the new global order be more human, supportive, responsible and participative, and may its essential purpose be to promote development, progress and the well-being of all the peoples of the Earth in an environment that is truly more just, fair and balanced. May God bless us and may we build together the peace that our children and future generations need.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Paraguay for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Nicanor Duarte Frutos, President of the Republic of Paraguay, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Hâmid Karzai, President of Afghanistan

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will hear an address by the President of Afghanistan.

Mr. Hâmid Karzai, President of Afghanistan, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Hâmid Karzai, President of Afghanistan, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Karzai: There is no reality more oppressive than the silence of a nation. For too long, Afghanistan was a silenced nation, a country without a voice. After decades of being suppressed into silence, our nation is beginning to have a voice of its own. Recovering from the tragedy of war and destruction, Afghanistan is determined to reverse the effects of the suffering it has long endured.

A lot has changed in Afghanistan over the last two years. But no change is so critical and pervasive as the animated response of the people of Afghanistan to the recent developments in our country. I find no sight more rewarding than that of our young girls and boys flocking to schools every morning. I find few things more engaging than the company of elderly representatives who come to Kabul from far-flung parts of the country to discuss their priorities for reconstruction. And, in the same order, there is nothing more enthusing than the active participation of Afghan men and women in the process of public consultation for the new constitution.

From the public consultations conducted in connection with the constitution drafting process, we know that the people of Afghanistan want a modern, unitary State that is committed to Islamic values and the preservation of peace and national unity, a State that ensures security for all its citizens, enforces justice and the rule of law and promotes prosperity. As in any post-war society, the need for security and for removing the threat of arms and armed factions is a compelling issue for all Afghans. Our people demand the establishment of truly national and competent institutions, notably the army and the police. Afghans want State institutions that are professional and representative and an administration that is efficient and free of corruption. The Afghan people want tolerance for other religions, protection of human rights and affirmative action to promote the rights of women.

Since I addressed the Assembly in September of last year, Afghanistan has taken significant strides in the path of post-war reconstruction. While total stability may not have been achieved yet, today Afghanistan is more stable and peaceful than in any

other period in its recent history. The International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) to the credit of the participating countries, has done a tremendous job of securing the nation's capital. That is partly the reason that people from other parts of the country have demanded that ISAF be expanded to their areas, too. We see NATO's decision to take over the command of ISAF in Kabul as a positive development. The Afghan people have also welcomed the provincial reconstruction teams that are supported by the coalition member States. Reconstruction and security are tied to one another, and we are absolutely certain that no matter what flag they fly, forces that ensure stability will be welcomed throughout Afghanistan.

However, we recognize that providing security to the people of Afghanistan is ultimately our own responsibility. We are grateful to the international community, the United States and Germany in particular, for making a determined effort to help us embark on a process of reforming and rebuilding our security institutions, namely the Afghan National Army and the national police.

After an arduous process of restructuring, we have just completed the reform of the Ministry of Defence. That step is now paving the way for the implementation of the nation-wide programme on disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, which will begin in earnest in mid-October with assistance from Japan.

A Constitution is the bedrock of the modern State. Under the Bonn Agreement, my Government was assigned the historic task of giving Afghanistan its new Constitution. The commission assigned that task has just finished the draft Constitution. The draft will be submitted in December for approval to a constitutional grand council of the Afghan people, which in our language is called a Loya Jirga. Work on the reform of the judicial system and on drafting new secondary laws has also continued, with notable outcomes achieved in recent months. The laws on political parties and banking have now been officially adopted.

Having started from a below-zero baseline, the 30 per cent economic growth rate that Afghanistan enjoyed last year is a promising start. Committed as we are to an open-market economy, and seeing the private sector as the true engine for growth, we have moved aggressively to create the legal and financial

frameworks needed for a positive environment for the private sector. Our newly adopted laws governing investment, banking and property rights, the new stable currency and the bureaucratic reforms we have enacted provide a liberal and conducive underpinning for rapid economic growth. Like never before, Afghanistan is open to business.

Once, in the past, Afghanistan was at the centre of a global threat, that of terrorism. Our vision for the future is that Afghanistan should be a centre for economic opportunity. We do not call ourselves a land-locked country; rather, we are a land-bridging country. Afghanistan connects South Asia, Central Asia and the Middle East, a fact to which geo-strategists have long been attracted. But it is time that Afghanistan's vast potential for facilitating trade and economic activity is exploited.

Through such nationwide programmes as the National Solidarity Programme, the Government aims to take reconstruction to the villages and households of Afghanistan. Perhaps no other priority features more widely in the demands of the Afghan people than the provision of education. Today, fortunately, almost 40 per cent of the students and teachers in primary and secondary education are female. That is a huge increase from the close to zero percentage that we inherited from the Taliban. Millions of textbooks have been published, and schools are being built at a higher rate than ever. However, in other areas of service-provision the need is much greater than our capacity to deliver.

The struggle against the production of, and trafficking in, narcotics continues. We see a direct connection between narcotics and terrorism, and it is in our absolute national interest to fight both. Both are transnational challenges. We in the region and in the international community must take the strategic decision, in the spirit of true partnership, to fight against both menaces.

As we acknowledge that the road ahead for Afghanistan is long and tortuous, we appreciate the fact that significant achievements have been made over the last two years. The people of Afghanistan are grateful to the international community for its crucial support. While countries that have extended a friendly hand to Afghanistan are far too many to thank individually, it would be unfair not to single out the United States, the European Union and Japan for special thanks. The United States of America has led

the international community by example in offering support for Afghanistan. The additional assistance provided to us under the Accelerated Success Initiative will go a long way towards rebuilding our country. The neighbours of Afghanistan also have a special place in our hearts. Our people will always remember the warm welcome they received from their brothers and sisters in Pakistan and Iran. In addition, Afghans hold Secretary-General Kofi Annan and his Special Representative Lakhdar Brahimi in very high esteem. Their kind-hearted attention to Afghanistan is highly appreciated.

Cognizant of our new situation and the emerging opportunities that exist today, we are determined to build friendly, civil and constructive relationships with countries of the world. We continue to extend a sincere hand of friendship to Pakistan and all our other neighbours on the basis of the requirements of a civilized relationship. We will never permit our territory to be used against any other country, and expect the same in return.

We are deeply concerned about the loss of innocent lives in Palestine and Israel. We support the realization of the right to self-determination for our Palestinian brothers and sisters.

We are fully committed to remaining a resilient partner with the international community in the fight against terrorism.

All the achievements I have just noted amount only to a good beginning. Our challenge is to stay the course. That will depend not only on the resolute determination of the Afghan people, but also on the continued engagement of the international community.

While the achievements are significant, and although challenges are inevitable, today, in this forum, I wish to point to what can potentially amount to a critical threat, namely, the ongoing threat of terrorism. The crisis in Afghanistan may well be over, but the forces of violence continue to threaten. Embodied in various manifestations, from militant infiltrations to hateful teachings at places disguised as madrassas, terrorism continues to make inroads into the space of peace and prosperity that we want to secure for our nation.

Islam, our universalist religion, has absolutely no place for terrorism. The apostles of hatred who preach murder in the name of religion and who abuse the name

of Islam and the sanctity of madrassas are the enemies of Islam. They act against all that Islam teaches, namely, peace, tolerance, compassion, social justice and the good of humanity.

Terrorists aim to harm the nation of Afghanistan, a deeply believing Muslim nation that is averse to extremism. They pose a threat to the process of reconstruction in Afghanistan. Terrorists see their lasting defeat in the success of reconstruction. They are therefore maliciously intent on derailing the process of reconstruction in Afghanistan. That must stop. We must defeat the forces and ideas of violence in the region. Today terrorism is a liability to the Governments in the region. Governments must stop using extremism as an instrument of policy. As long as terrorism survives in this part of the world, neither Afghanistan nor our neighbours, nor indeed the rest of the world, can be safe.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of Afghanistan for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Hāmid Karzai, President of Afghanistan, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Vladimir Voronin, President of the Republic of Moldova

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Moldova.

Mr. Vladimir Voronin, President of the Republic of Moldova, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Vladimir Voronin, President of the Report of Moldova, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Voronin (*spoke in Romanian; English text provided by the delegation*): Allow me at the outset to congratulate the Honourable Julian Hunte on the occasion of his election to the important position of President, at the fifty-eighth session, of the General Assembly — the most representative and prestigious organization in the world. I am convinced that his election is recognition of both the achievements of the country he represents and his personal merits.

Allow me also to express my gratitude to Mr. Jan Kavan for the responsibility he showed in carrying out his duties as President at the previous session.

I also must point out the remarkable role played by the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, in enhancing the authority and efficiency of the United Nations, particularly in the context of the dramatic events that the international community faced during the past few years. For the entire world, the United Nations was and continues to be an organization serving the noble ideals of peace, equality and economic prosperity of the peoples on our planet.

The international community has undertaken enormous efforts to ensure that phenomena alien to the spirit and aspirations of the contemporary world such as poverty, oppression, terrorism and the dangers of ecological disaster are perceived as reasons for general concern that have in turn led to mobilization of all nations' forces. We are aware of how the international community has gone beyond adopting emotive humanitarian declarations to establish institutions and organizations that are not only actively analysing various problems, but are also working to correct economic, social and political developments, wherever they occur.

Global threats are being given a global rebuff, and the chaos of destruction is ever more strongly opposed by integrated ethics and new technology for structuring international relations based on supranational values of human civilization, the universality of the principles of democracy, civil freedoms and life itself.

The epochal Millennium Summit and the summits held at Rome, Monterrey, Doha and Johannesburg marked the foreshadowing of a new system of global priorities aimed at preventing and neutralizing possible threats. Clearly, that system is leaving less and less room for resolving the individual problems of sovereign States and is increasingly opening the way for making use of international mechanisms to that end. That system, which has been increasingly gaining in modern politics, is now determining the new context of the relationship between States and international institutions, excluding the dependent attitude of trivial profiting assumed by national elites towards international assistance and requiring a responsible and decisive approach to the issue of reforming our own

economies and establishing modern social and political standards.

Undoubtedly, we are currently entering a century of integration, an era in which traditional inter-State barriers are coming down. Yet, it is an era in which the local interests of some countries may in fact lead to benefits for the entire community. Therefore, it is extremely important to be aware that the current stage of globalization will not disappoint us, only if, on the way to integration — the integration of values and standards — the initiative for taking the first step belongs to the States themselves. That is a task that in principle is new for all us — heads of State and politicians.

It is not gratuitous that I began my speech with these considerations. I did so at the outset because only such an approach can provide for the success of the State I represent to significant extent.

Moldova embarked on the path of independent development 12 years ago. The chronic Transnistrian problem, de-industrialization and economic recession, poverty, nationalism and separatism served for a decade as the calling card of our country.

The "first step" policy is being implemented in Moldova in two areas of the utmost importance. First, there is the problem of the Transnistrian settlement. We are aware of the fundamental character of the motives that are at the core of this 10-year-old conflict. As the primary way to resolve these contradictions, we have proposed that a new State constitution be drafted and adopted through joint efforts. In the draft that currently is being elaborated, we are insisting on giving up the status of unitary State, which does not take into account the profound specific characteristics of the Transnistrian region. We are laying as the basis of the new State draft the principles of the federative organization of our country, which take into consideration the long-term interests of all the regions of Moldova.

In eliminating the effects of the nationalistic hysteria characteristic of the early 1990s, which divided both the society and the country, Moldova has declared itself determined to build a harmonious multi-ethnic society, based on principles of ethnic and linguistic liberalism and pluralism. I believe that it is precisely this policy that corresponds to those integrationist trends that are replacing isolationism and secessionism.

Unity in diversity — that is the principle of our policy today, and that is the motto of the Moldovan chairmanship in the Council of Europe. We are firmly convinced that only those transformations will be able to serve as the proper basis for resolving both the domestic problems of the Moldovan State and the problems concerning regional security.

In the second place, the Republic of Moldova has proclaimed the path of European integration a priority national strategy of the State. We are well aware of how difficult that path is, and of the responsibility it requires, but at the same time we firmly state that it represents first and foremost an internal political and economic option for Moldova. We know that this option requires effective and comprehensive consolidation of the market economy institutions, further advancement of democratic reforms and the development of civil society and the social sphere. Yet however difficult the task before us may be, we hope that in time our decision will lead to the establishment of a national consensus.

The President took the Chair.

Peace and security on our planet may constitute the guarantee that all States will adopt a joint position regarding the acknowledgement of modern social, economic, political and legal standards. It is clear that there is no other way. Humankind is currently more vulnerable than ever to crises and disasters of every scope and degree. That is why civilization today does not have, and should not have, any local problems; nor does it, or should it, have any dark corners where, as in a hothouse, terrorism, repression and defiant disdain for the opinion of the international community can flourish.

In developing such a position, the most important role lies with the Security Council. In that context, I express my support for the idea of making the Security Council more representative. The Republic of Moldova stands for a reasonable increase in the number of permanent and non-permanent members in the Security Council, which would further ensure the principle of equal geographic representation and would reflect the interests of all regional groups. Fully aware of the difficulty of reaching consensus on that issue, I call upon all Members of the United Nations to make every effort to adopt a definitive decision to that end.

The Republic of Moldova also supports the idea of restoring the role of the General Assembly as the

most important, representative and deliberative body of the United Nations. Along the same lines, I think there is a need to consolidate further the capacity of the Economic and Social Council as the coordinator of United Nations funds and programmes. I am sure that the further development of United Nations institutions and structures will be the best proof of the viability of the principles of the Organization, its growing prestige and its leading role in the world. I express the hope that the United Nations will know how to place itself at the vanguard of current positive developments.

I am firmly convinced that the proceedings of the fifty-eighth session of the General Assembly will take place in a spirit of sincere cooperation and solidarity, so that the representatives of all States will make sustained efforts to achieve the noble goals of peace, stability and prosperity.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Moldova for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Vladimir Voronin, President of the Republic of Moldova, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

**Address by Mr. Francisco Guillermo Flores Pérez,
President of the Republic of El Salvador**

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of El Salvador.

Mr. Francisco Guillermo Flores Pérez, President of the Republic of El Salvador, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome His Excellency Mr. Francisco Guillermo Flores Pérez, President of the Republic of El Salvador, and to invite him to address the General Assembly.

President Flores Pérez (spoke in Spanish): Before addressing the pressing issues before the international community and expressing our position on the issues that have been discussed here, I would like to begin by referring to the concrete example of my own country.

On 6 January 2003, the people and Government of El Salvador received an official communication from the Secretary-General informing us of the

completion of the verification function of the United Nations vis-à-vis the Peace Agreement that ended 13 years of war in our country. Eleven years have elapsed since that historic Peace Agreement put an end to an armed conflict that had been destroying our country for over a decade.

Before the war we were a poor country. Sixty-per cent of our fellow citizens lived under the poverty line. Our country has also been dealt a harsh blow by nature. Every generation of Salvadorans has had to rebuild their lives due to the fact that, throughout our history, there has never been a twenty-five-year period without the occurrence of a natural disaster of enormous proportions. We are also an overpopulated country, with over 6 million inhabitants sharing 21,000 square kilometres. That makes us one of the most densely populated countries of the American continent. Being completely dependant on agriculture, fluctuations in the prices of coffee and sugar have always determined our prospects for development.

A little over a decade ago we stood no chance of meeting our financial commitments. Our debts far exceeded our ability to pay. Poor, small, overpopulated, indebted, dependent upon agriculture, afflicted by natural disasters and immersed in a widespread armed conflict, El Salvador appeared not to have a future barely 12 years ago. Violence, coupled with the harsh realities of underdevelopment, appeared to have doomed us to a vicious circle devoid of hope.

We are a different country today. We view the future with confidence, for we have discovered our capacities. In just 12 years we have reduced poverty by half, from 60 per cent of our population, in 1991, to 33 per cent today. Over 30 per cent of our population had been living in extreme poverty. Today only half as many, 15 per cent, live in that distressing situation. Our efforts have had a direct impact on the standard of living of all of our citizens. Twelve years ago 25 per cent of Salvadorans did not know how to read or write. That figure is only 13 per cent today. The child mortality rate, which had been at 45 per thousand births, stands at 25 per thousand today.

We have accomplished all that by dedicating ourselves to the most pressing needs of our people. In order to connect our most isolated towns, we have built one kilometre of road every day for the last four years. We have also built three schools every day in the same period, so as to educate our poorest children. Similarly,

we have built 106 houses every day for low-income families. And every five days we have built a new health centre.

Having once been completely dependent on agriculture, today we rank number 3, out of 24 Latin American countries, in terms of export growth. During the difficult decade of the 1990s we managed to grow at a much faster rate than our region at large. We have now become the second-ranking country in Latin America in economic growth.

Despite the immense burden posed by reconstruction after the earthquakes of 2001, year after year we have reduced our budget deficit, bringing it to under 1 per cent in 2004. This has allowed us to control inflation, lowering it from 30 per cent to 2 per cent this year, and thus to avoid a decline in family income. We have zero risk of devaluation and today, after having seen interest rates of 30 per cent, we have the lowest bank interest rates of our region — 6.8 per cent. For 11 years now, we have had no fluctuation in exchange rates, allowing us to acquire a rate of investment that is matched in Latin America only by Chile, Mexico and my country.

The living conditions of Salvadorans have changed considerably. Rates of unemployment have fallen from 13 per cent to 6.8 per cent. Having had only 250,000 telephone lines in 1992, we now have 1.6 million. It is less expensive to make a telephone call from El Salvador to United Nations Headquarters than it is from Headquarters to El Salvador. In just over a decade, the number of automobiles has grown by a factor of four. We have managed to increase the supply of drinking water and electrification in rural areas by 50 per cent. We have achieved peace. We have devoted our energies to economic development and our resources to the poorest among us.

I have elaborated on developments in my country in recent years because it seems to me that we in El Salvador have discovered an effective way not only of resolving violent conflict, but also of combating poverty. Such means, which the international community is seeking to confront the complexities of our world, are based on universally valid principles. Thus, to understand the case of El Salvador is to understand new possibilities for other nations and solutions to other problems.

The two most important challenges for a nation are learning how to live and understanding why we are

alive. The former is an entirely practical matter, requiring knowledge of the workings of the modern world — how it works and what opportunities are available to a poor country in a world that is rapidly evolving. The second is an entirely abstract matter, but it is all the more important for that, because only when we are clear about the meaning of our shared lives can we develop a sense of purpose that allows us to channel the energies of a community towards a national objective.

It is a paradox rich in significance that we Salvadorans, in order to find our commitment to the future, had to delve into the traditions that gave us our identity in the past. When we found ourselves in the dead end of war, we had to rethink our destiny. In spite of our suffering, we had all the resources we needed to move ahead: talent, energy, experience, faith and will. We had the prudence to avoid future dangers and the courage to confront present challenges.

The basic principle on which we have built our country is that every Salvadoran has access to the truth. In every part of our land, it is possible for every Salvadoran to speak out, to express himself or herself without any constraint based on status. It is on the basis of the views of our compatriots that we have built the new El Salvador. We decided that, if this were to become a reality, three principles were needed: freedom, justice and the inalienable right to life. The concrete manifestations of these values are democracy, economic freedom and the rule of law. This applies not only to El Salvador and Salvadorans, but equally to all the inhabitants of our world. Every human being has access to the truth. It is in the human capacity for reason that we find our moral potential. That is why we must be free.

At a time when we wonder about the role of the United Nations, we must recall that the Organization was born to ensure those fundamental rights. This forum cannot be paralysed in debates when freeing a nation from tyranny is at issue. We must all act in the face of oppression. Terrorism is a negation of all the values we share. We need a consensus on the values that unite us and a renewed will for action.

We can debate interminably here the issue of Iraq and the current circumstances of the Iraqi people, but what brooks no debate is the fact that this forum has not acted in a way commensurate with the demands of an increasingly complex world. The United Nations

must be rethought and restructured so that it can meet the objectives for which it was created.

We Salvadorans speak with the solidity that we have gained from having fully shouldered our responsibilities towards the international community. We are participants in the reconstruction of Iraq. We speak with the legitimacy of having been ourselves the battleground of the last conflict of the cold war and we understand how the mediation of the international community can help to find a solution to a conflict and give hope to a desperate nation.

In conclusion, we wish to express our sorrow at the death of United Nations staff members in Baghdad. We reaffirm the right of all nations to have a voice in this forum. The absence of the Republic of China in the deliberations of this forum represents a rejection of the legitimate aspirations of a nation that should speak in its own voice, just as we do, in this body and the community of nations.

The liberator of the Americas summarized, in words far more eloquent than mine, the values that must inspire this forum and our discussions here. He said:

"Peoples, no one can take possession of your sovereignty, unless it be violently and illegitimately. Flee that country where one person alone seeks to exercise all powers. That will be a country of slaves."

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of El Salvador for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Francisco Guillermo Flores Pérez, President of the Republic of El Salvador, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Alfonso Portillo Cabrera, President of the Republic of Guatemala

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Guatemala.

Mr. Alfonso Portillo Cabrera, President of the Republic of Guatemala, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Alfonso Portillo Cabrera,

President of the Republic of Guatemala, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Portillo Cabrera (*spoke in Spanish*): I come before this parliament of humankind to present my final report as a Head of State who believes in interdependence and for whom sovereignty is not a closed door separating nations, but rather an open window affording a glimpse into the identity of each one, furthering the respectful interchange of experiences and the quest for understanding and solidarity among peoples.

My presence here reflects Guatemala's commitment to the United Nations, whose presence in my country has been crucial to the implementation of the Peace Agreements concluded in 1996. It also gives me the opportunity to participate in the debate concerning the main subjects that make up the international agenda, while at the same time allowing me once again to express our solidarity with the inhabitants of the great city of New York over the tragic events of two years ago.

I wish to reiterate our energetic repudiation of the treacherous attack against United Nations headquarters in Baghdad that took place just a few weeks ago. We especially regret the loss of valuable officials of the Organization, including the esteemed Sergio Vieira de Mello.

I also wish to express our gratitude to Mr. Jan Kavan, of the Czech Republic, for his enlightened leadership of the previous session. At the same time, I would like very sincerely to congratulate Mr. Julian Hunte on having assumed the presidency of the General Assembly at this session. We are pleased to see a distinguished representative of our own region occupy such an important post. We have no doubt that, with his proven abilities and his well-known experience, he will be quite successful in conducting our deliberations.

Guatemala, just like its brotherly countries in Latin America, has experienced a dramatic period at the close of the twentieth century. That time has been characterized by a complex agenda involving various challenges including those of entering into the globalization process, building peace with justice and consolidating democracy in a way that includes good governance.

In that regard, during the last four years we have sought to make progress in opening up Guatemala to the world and in making it part of globalization's technological, financial and cultural currents. We promoted the democratization of institutions, mechanisms, practices and values capable of commingling freedom with authority and effectiveness with equality. We have also nurtured the concept of peace based on justice and respect for human rights.

Guatemala is a country where several historical tasks remain to be completed or have been permanently postponed. When I assumed the presidency, in January 2000, I resolved to thoroughly address some of those pending issues. We have freed our country from its captivity by powerful economic interests. There are no longer tax exemptions that favour individuals. Trade policy is no longer manipulated to the detriment of the production of small farmers. Economic policy is now seen as an instrument of social development. After a century of captive markets, local monopolies are now exposed to competition.

The Peace Agreements bestowed on Guatemala a programme for democratization. With an eye towards the twenty-first century, the Agreements constitute a proposal for a wide-ranging reinvigoration of coexistence between Guatemalans. But the Agreements have also presented us with the challenge of simultaneously completing various tasks pertaining to different historical processes that other societies have carried out in stages.

I am pleased to say that we have made progress in various substantive areas. However, I must also admit that we have fallen short, or inadequately addressed, other areas.

Against the opposition of powerful interests, we made a determined effort to increase the tax rate. We achieved a historical level in the collection of taxes, but without attaining the goal that had been set.

We carried out the most significant financial reform since 1945 in order to modernize the banking system, reduce the risks of speculation and restore to the system its true mediation function.

We modernized the labour law, which since 1944 had suffered a series of setbacks. We consistently raised the minimum wage in real terms at an unprecedented pace. On average, workers in the

countryside now earn 50 per cent more than they did four years ago.

Our illiteracy rate has historically been shameful. We therefore adopted plans that made it possible to reduce that rate by almost half. Special attention has been devoted to young girls. Through scholarships and school feeding programmes, we have removed tens of thousands of children from child labour. We have also reformed curricula to include the philosophy of the Peace Agreements. And we have considerably increased school enrolment.

With regard to basic health care, we have confronted structural weaknesses in the critical areas of child and maternal mortality rates and nutrition.

However, much more remains to be done. We are in an unfavourable economic environment. The traditional engines of growth and employment have weakened, and the necessary changes in production are taking place slowly. We have therefore undertaken a massive effort to stabilize the economy and have implemented emergency measures, such as providing small farmers with agricultural supplies so that they can sustain their productive capacity.

The issue of transforming the production process is so sensitive that it was a contributing factor in the civil war that raged for almost 40 years during the last century. Recognizing the urgency of the issue, I introduced reconciliation mechanisms in which all sectors participate in an effort to define the country's strategic policies, including in the areas of economic and rural development.

Our people have made significant advances in the area of participation in the past three years. We have carried out the country's most significant reform by decentralizing our institutions, strengthening local development councils and granting greater powers and functions to municipal governments. Indigenous peoples are now recognized as such and are able to participate in defining a new institutional landscape grounded in their own cultures. Women also have an increased public role and are developing innovative ways of organizing.

All those efforts are aimed at reweaving our social fabric, which had been torn apart by the war. Reconciliation is an essential task in that regard, and the Government must foster a favourable climate for it to take place. That is why I assumed international

commitments to counter violations of human rights. That is also why we have begun a national compensation programme that includes reparations for the families of the more than 200,000 victims of the war, most of whom were indigenous persons. We also trust that the High Commissioner for Human Rights will establish an Office in Guatemala.

Nevertheless, impunity continues to be a difficult issue to overcome. Judicial bodies continue to be weak, which is what led me to put forward an unprecedented temporary measure to strengthen local institutional capacity. I asked for the support of the United Nations in immediately establishing a commission to investigate illegal groups and clandestine security mechanisms, as several repressive groups of the past that are now in league with organized crime are threatening and intimidating human rights activists, judges and journalists.

Civilian authority must be strengthened if we are to restore all aspects of democracy. Our efforts in that regard have been clear. We have established a civilian national intelligence agency, as well as a civilian body responsible for presidential security. We now have a defence policy in keeping with the principles of democratic security that was the product of an open debate among the members of our society. We have designed laws to provide for free access to information, the declassification of secret State archives and the establishment of civilian controls over security functions, which includes an advisory council on security. Those efforts are well under way and should be fully implemented during the next few years.

Promoting a culture of peace has not been easy. The trauma of war continues to hamper trust in our society. Political polarization also exists, as a result of powerful economic and military groups defending their privileges. However, human life is less endangered and the democratization process continues to move forward.

I will fulfil two other basic commitments in the remaining 114 days of my presidency. One of them will be to ensure that Guatemalans are able to take part in a free and transparent electoral process that is closely monitored by the international community and in which all political forces participate without exception. Such an event will be taking place for only the second time in our history during the past century.

The second commitment involves carrying out an orderly transition of power that safeguards the reforms begun in the context of the Peace Agreements. To that end, I have worked with my Government team to come up with a basic transition agenda that includes providing for continuity in programmes and policies and the strengthening of institutions involved in the peace process.

I would now like to turn briefly to some of the issues we will be dealing with during this session. In particular, I would like to respond to the challenge that the Secretary-General put before us this morning, namely, how to rethink the United Nations in these times of fundamental changes.

As I have already said, we fully support the United Nations as the highest proponent of multilateralism. We also firmly support the stewardship of Secretary-General Kofi Annan. We concur with his view that it is imperative that we adapt the Organization to the exigencies of globalization. We will also support efforts aimed at improving the managerial capacities of the Secretariat and at promoting the reform of intergovernmental bodies.

We therefore believe that we should not delay our efforts to make the Security Council more representative, and its procedures more transparent. Moreover, we think that it is necessary to strengthen the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council in order that the three principal organs of our Organization mutually support one another.

We reiterate our opposition to all forms of terrorism and we support the collective efforts of the international community to combat that scourge.

We believe that the United Nations should continue to give priority to the essential issue of development. Along with multilateral financial organizations, our Organization should dedicate itself to the task of ensuring that the benefits of globalization are widely shared among all the inhabitants of the world. We also stress the singular importance of the Monterrey Consensus and the Johannesburg Plan of Action.

We express our disappointment at the lack of progress made at the recent meeting of trade ministers held in Cancún. As part of the G-21, we commit ourselves to working constructively to bring together the positions of all parties to produce a more open and

transparent international trade regime that provides more opportunities for developing countries.

We also underscore the need to give greater importance in the international agenda to the situation of immigrants and migrant workers while focusing on undocumented immigrants, who constitute a vulnerable group vis-à-vis the need to protect human rights.

I would especially like to refer to the subject of children and to the obligation of States to guarantee their rights and protection. A case in point is the effort that is taking place in the context of the Convention on the Rights of the Child to re-establish links between three Guatemalan children and their mother, Gabriela Arias.

We support all efforts to put an end to the tragic spiral of violence afflicting the Middle East and to achieve a just and lasting peace in that long-suffering region.

We associate ourselves with efforts aimed at restoring peace, security and the rule of law in Iraq, as well as to reinstate that country's sovereignty. We share the view that the United Nations should play a significant role in that undertaking.

We support the heartfelt aspiration of the 23 million citizens of the Republic of China on Taiwan to be represented in international organizations such as the United Nations. Guatemala, like all of Central America, believes those aspirations to be a positive force for peace and democracy in the world.

We are making our best effort to strengthen the bonds of friendship and neighbourliness with Belize, without prejudice to the search for ways to peacefully, honourably, equitably and permanently resolve our territorial dispute. We express our complete willingness to continue to seek a negotiated solution to that dispute within the framework of the Organization of American States.

We reiterate our devotion to, and support for, Central American integration, as well as our solidarity with, and commitment to, all of Latin America and the Caribbean.

We live in exceptional times that affect each and every one of our countries, as well as the United Nations as a whole. Such critical moments create opportunities for re-evaluation and change. I hope that God will grant us the wisdom to take advantage of

those opportunities, thereby making it possible for us to overcome the obstacles that have served to distract humankind from a future of solidarity and common welfare.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Guatemala for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Alfonso Portillo Cabrera, President of the Republic of Guatemala, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Ms. Megawati Soekarnoputri, President of the Republic of Indonesia

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Indonesia.

Ms. Megawati Soekarnoputri, President of the Republic of Indonesia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations Her Excellency Ms. Megawati Soekarnoputri, President of the Republic of Indonesia, and to invite her to address the Assembly.

President Soekarnoputri: Allow me to begin by drawing the General Assembly's attention to the fact that, despite all its deficiencies and weaknesses, it must be admitted that the United Nations has demonstrated its merits and contributions, not only for humanity in general but also, in particular, for its Member States. This world body has maintained minimum standards that every State must meet regarding the protection and promotion of the human rights of all its citizens. The United Nations has developed, and strived to implement, international laws binding upon each and every member. It has also instituted and put into practice an array of legal instruments that are very useful in preventing and settling conflicts among States, as well as in promoting a framework of cooperation among nations.

I would therefore like to take this opportunity to convey the gratitude and appreciation of my country to the United Nations for the invaluable work it has done for our benefit. The contributions of the Organization to our political and economic development are well recorded in our history. Those contributions range from its mediating role during the period of our struggle to preserve our national independence, from 1945 to

1949, to its active participation in our efforts to employ our independence wisely in our pursuit of national development.

Our national State — which may not only be the most heterogeneous but also the largest archipelagic State in the world — is built upon racial, ethnic, religious and cultural pluralities. Our people still live predominately traditional lives, dispersed along the equator throughout over 17,000 islands. The most devastating financial crisis in Indonesia's history not only ignited conflicts between ethnic groups, but also revived separatist movements in several regions. We are doing all we can to contain and defuse those separatist movements. In the process, we have diminished our capacity to strengthen our economic recovery.

Beginning in 2002, while we were contending with those difficulties, terrorism began to inflict its brutality upon our homeland. We believed for quite some time that international terrorism would spare Indonesia because we had a tradition of tolerance for human differences. However, we must now face the reality that Indonesia has become a target of terrorism, and as a result has suffered enormous losses in human lives. We have been wondering why those terrifying acts were carried out. What were the underlying reasons, motives and arguments for them? How were they related to international terrorist networks? What course of action should be adopted to effectively prevent, deter and eradicate them?

We have adopted a strong set of laws to prevent and eradicate the threats posed by terrorism. Equipped with those reinforced legal instruments, we have dismantled terrorist cells in the country, and prosecutors have brought members of those cells to justice. Several of them have already been handed sentences that befit their crimes.

The people of Indonesia, who are predominantly of the Islamic faith, support that national policy. Large and active Islamic organizations, such as Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama, as well as the Indonesian Ulema Council and prominent Islamic figures, are one in condemning those terrorist acts. It should be noted that the terrorists — who are few in number, but fanatical — often claim that they are fighting in the name of Islam. They must be a mere minority, as Islam — which teaches equality, justice and the kinship shared by all humankind — cannot

possibly endorse the indiscriminate killing of innocent individuals. As in other Muslim countries, adherents of mainstream Islam in Indonesia practice moderation and are strongly opposed to violence. Although they are a small splinter group in the large Indonesian community of Muslims, the perpetrators of those terrorist acts represent a branch of international terrorism. The motives and justifying arguments of their movement apparently stem from the prolonged unjust attitude exhibited by big Powers towards countries whose inhabitants profess Islam, particularly as regards resolving the Middle East conflict.

We should truly be prudent and sensible in the face of such a long-outstanding issue. It is difficult to refute the impression that the policy on conflict resolution in the Middle East is not only unjust but also one-sided. Clearly, the Middle East problem is not a conflict of religions or of religious adherents, although some religious nuances may be part of the issue.

We are very much aware of the background of that situation. Whatever the reasoning espoused by any one of us, we must all admit that the absence of a just attitude, exacerbated by a feeling of being sidelined and ignored, in addition to the lack of a formal means to channel aspirations, has fostered a climate for violence and made it grow. In our view, those are actually both the seeds and roots of a problem that has a tendency to grow and expand. Among other things, that problem has also even led to devastating and tragic acts of terror.

At this distinguished forum, I would like to appeal to world leaders to open the doors of their hearts in dealing with that issue, which is crucial to world peace, the welfare of humankind and the destiny of the human race. I believe we will be able to carry out that noble task if we are prepared to look into the problem with clear hearts and minds. Indeed, we cannot be the "most just"; but it is necessary to have a just mind and attitude.

It is depressing to observe that we have been very slow in understanding the root causes of the problem. The war in the Middle East a few months ago is just another reflection of the situation. The war has created many more problems than it was supposed to solve. I do believe that a great many lessons can be learned from the Iraq war.

In order to prevent, deter or eradicate the problem of international terrorism, I should like to propose that

the countries whose citizens have been the main targets of terrorist groups should review their conventional anti-terrorism policies, particularly in dealing with the Arab-Israeli conflict. They should adopt a policy that ensures that all parties involved are given just and equal treatment. Indeed, many eminent Muslims in Indonesia believe that once the major Powers behave in a more just manner and make clear their impartiality in the Middle East, most of the root causes of terrorism perpetrated in the name of Islam — which cannot be justified under any circumstance — will be resolved. As the Head of State of the largest Muslim country in the world, I sincerely invite all world leaders to pay particular attention to that issue.

Let us prevent the root causes of terrorism from spreading and triggering the emergence of other unsatisfactory aspirations, including in the social and economic spheres. The failure to reach consensus at the recent meeting of the World Trade Organization and the continued slow progress — not to say stalemate — in the implementation of various social and economic global agendas will only complicate and proliferate existing global problems.

We are all interested in making the world a more peaceful, stable, prosperous, just and humane place. Were those not the noble objectives explicitly stipulated in the Charter of the United Nations at the inception of the Organization, in June 1945? We are all aware that the world has undergone rapid changes. Technology has transformed the world and turned it into an open and almost borderless place. Human life and its inherent value system have been developing very fast, and any institutional and procedural regimes and instruments require adjustment and improvement.

Forty-three years ago, in 1960, our first President, Mr. Soekarno, spoke clearly about that issue. In his address to the General Assembly entitled "To build the world anew", he referred to the need to reform both the international order and relations among nations of the world. We now all realize and recognize the truth of his call. We are indeed in need of fundamental reform. If, to that end, the performance of the Organization requires improvement to enable it to contribute more constructively to the attainment of a more peaceful, stable, just, prosperous and humane world, then we must have the courage to review, revitalize and empower its institutions and working methods.

We must strengthen international cooperation and reinforce regional engagement. In South-East Asia, we are continuing to enhance the role of the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN). Next month, at the ASEAN summit that Indonesia will host in Bali, we expect to take concrete steps towards forming an ASEAN security community that will support and complement our efforts at becoming an ASEAN economic community. I believe that a stable, peaceful and prosperous ASEAN will significantly contribute to the realization of the objectives of the United Nations.

There are no easy tasks. But building a better region and a more democratic world is worth all our patience and hard work. After all, that is our basic responsibility. From Indonesia's own experience in striving to become a more fully democratic country, I know how difficult that kind of work can be. We are therefore aware that building a more democratic world is even more difficult. Nevertheless, I wish to reiterate that my country remains committed to fulfilling its international obligations and that we will continue to work with other members of the United Nations to build the new world we dream of.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Indonesia for the statement she has just made.

Ms. Megawati Soekarnoputri, President of the Republic of Indonesia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Olusegun Obasanjo, President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

Mr. Olusegun Obasanjo, President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Olusegun Obasanjo, President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Obasanjo: On behalf of the Government and people of Nigeria, I would like to congratulate you, Sir, on your election as the President of the fifty-eighth session of the General Assembly. I

assure you of the cooperation and support of my delegation in ensuring a successful outcome to this session. Permit me also to acknowledge the excellent work done by your predecessor, Mr. Jan Kavan. I also wish to commend the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, for his tireless efforts, vision and leadership, and for his inspiring address to the General Assembly this morning.

In recent months, many voices inside and outside of Governments have questioned the utility, relevance and efficacy of the United Nations, the only universal multilateral tool at our disposal. Even more tragically, sinister forces have taken aim at the United Nations and its dedicated staff, as demonstrated by the senseless attack on the United Nations compound in Baghdad. My Government once again joins the international community in condemning that heartless action, which claimed the lives of so many talented and dedicated staff members. We share the sorrow of the Secretary-General and his staff, and extend our heartfelt condolences to the bereaved families. In that connection, I wish to reaffirm my country's total commitment to, and support for, our Organization.

My Government is deeply concerned about the persistence of conflicts in many regions of the world, and in particular in our subregion of West Africa. The conflict in Liberia has again tested the will of the international community to respond proactively to conflicts and to the humanitarian catastrophes they leave in their wake. The decision of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) to deploy troops to Liberia in the face of obvious hesitation by the international community and despite the strain it placed on our resources was therefore indicative of our determination to show that we will not stand by wringing our hands when such catastrophic events occur in our neighbourhood. We are greatly relieved that our forward deployment of troops and the initiative to remove the former Liberian President from the scene have had such an immediate calming effect, which will hopefully be further reinforced by the deployment of a United Nations peacekeeping force.

I therefore wish to assure the General Assembly that Nigeria appreciates the decision taken by the Security Council in resolution 1509 (2003), of 19 September 2003, to authorize a multisectoral peacekeeping mission in Liberia in order to continue the achievement of the ECOWAS initiative. I should

like to emphasize the fact that if regional organizations are to play the lead role that the United Nations is increasingly demanding, the international community will not be able to escape its own responsibility to do much more to strengthen the requisite capacities of such organizations.

Let me now turn to another subject that is closely related to the conflicts in Africa. The proliferation of small arms and light weapons has been identified as one of the major factors fuelling conflicts. An effective strategy to deal with that proliferation entails controlling the illicit trade in that category of weapons emanating from the countries where they originate, as well as controlling their transfer to intermediaries and arms merchants. We therefore call for an early conclusion of negotiations on a legally binding international instrument to control the indiscriminate supply of small arms and light weapons, especially to non-State actors. In keeping with our commitment to the eradication of those weapons, ECOWAS has already established and renewed a moratorium on the importation of small arms and light weapons. To make that moratorium as effective as intended, we call for effective cooperation on the part of all producing countries.

In April 2003, the people of Nigeria reaffirmed their commitment to good governance and democracy by holding successful elections. Following our 1999 elections, which marked the transition from military to civilian Government, last April's election represented both our first civilian-to-civilian transition and a consolidation of our democratic process. I consider my re-election to a second — and under our Constitution, my last — term of office not only as a vote of confidence but also as a great challenge to deliver the dividends of democracy to our citizens. To meet that challenge, my Government has developed a programme of economic reforms, the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS). The programme, which places people first, is aimed at laying a solid foundation for sustainable socioeconomic transformation and poverty eradication. By its design, it will strengthen governance, enhance transparency, intensify the fight against corruption and develop infrastructure — especially in the areas of electricity, water and roads. It also places high priority on food security, agricultural development and the promotion of small- and medium-scale enterprises.

I believe that that ambitious economic reform will constitute an important national contribution to the attainment of the targets of the Millennium Development Goals and of the objectives of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). In that connection, my Government's new reform programme is a clarion call to national mobilization and re-orientation. However, it also envisages active cooperation by our multilateral and bilateral partners. We are all too well aware that the development of our agricultural sector, by which the majority of our people still earn their living, cannot be successful as long as huge subsidies to agriculture in the developed countries continue. My Government, therefore, wishes to use this forum to call again for the reform of the system of subsidies to agricultural production, which is strangulating agriculture in developing countries.

In this connection, it is regrettable that the reasonable proposals made by the group of developing countries at the recently concluded World Trade Organization (WTO) Ministerial Conference in Cancun were rejected by their negotiating partners, leading to the collapse of the Conference. Creating conditions of fair and undistorted trade would be the most effective way of providing additional resources to developing countries. This is particularly urgent in light of the low levels of official development assistance and the recent sharp decline in the flow of foreign direct investment.

Other areas that we hope the international community will address with determination include the problem of external debt. This continues to be a major obstacle to the development of my country and many other African countries. It is evident that the various initiatives by the international community on debt relief and debt management have been able neither to address nor solve the problems.

While appreciating the efforts by the international community in the context of the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) initiative, we must observe that these efforts have not provided adequate responses or solutions to the problems. This is even more true in the case of the heavily indebted middle-income countries, like Nigeria, for whom no special debt relief mechanism exists, although such machinery was successfully established for countries in Eastern and Central Europe, for instance.

Nigeria believes, therefore, that bolder steps must be taken to resolve the heavy debt burden, which for a

large number of countries has become unsustainable and a hindrance to development. I am afraid that we have no effective mechanism in place to tackle this problem. Neither the Bretton Woods institutions nor the Paris and London Clubs alone can provide lasting solutions and relief. I therefore believe that this issue is of such significance for the peace and development of such a large portion of the world community that we need to create a mechanism within the United Nations to address the problem in its full scope, based on the principle of the joint responsibility of debtors and creditors alike.

We welcome the ongoing negotiations for a legally binding instrument on the repatriation of illicitly acquired funds stashed away in foreign countries. We call for the early conclusion of the Convention on that issue. This Convention is expected to make more resources available for development and show concretely the global commitment to eradicating large-scale corruption, which is at the origin of the funds. In this connection, I must say that the experience of my country has been one of only lukewarm cooperation by most countries where our looted funds have been traced. Our partners among the great banking nations should recognize that it is contradictory to condemn corruption on the one hand, and, on the other, to hinder us in the recovery of the plundered funds. For our economic and social reform programmes, the funds to be recovered can make a huge difference in meeting our national objectives. I earnestly appeal through this forum for maximum cooperation in repatriating the looted funds. I take this opportunity to thank those countries that have matched their words with actions in assisting us in repatriating looted funds.

Last year, this Assembly endorsed the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) as the framework for development of the continent. We commend the Group of 8 for their Africa Action Plan to support the implementation of NEPAD and hope that this will soon be translated into cooperation on specific programmes and projects. In addition, we hope that the developed countries will also concretely demonstrate their support for NEPAD.

For our part in Nigeria, the Government's economic reform programme is a commitment to continue to make our contribution to an African renaissance, which will underpin NEPAD.

We welcome the establishment by the United Nations of the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa and urge that adequate resources be provided for its mandate to be discharged effectively.

The HIV/AIDS pandemic continues to ravage our continent, affecting most of all the productive segment of the population. To combat the epidemic, my Government has embarked on a major national programme of action, the highlight of which consists of a nationwide public enlightenment campaign and mass mobilization to deepen awareness and understanding of the disease, the prevention and control of its spread and modalities for providing care and support for people living with the virus. To contribute to the global programme on HIV/AIDS, Nigeria has redeemed its pledge of \$10,000,000 to the Global Fund.

Let me urge all countries that have not yet made pledges to the Global Fund to do so urgently. Those that have made pledges should kindly redeem them early. I wish to acknowledge with gratitude, the efforts so far deployed by the international community on the pandemic, and to thank Secretary-General Kofi Annan for convening yesterday the high-level plenary meeting devoted to HIV/AIDS. However, a lot still needs to be done in a more concerted way to address all aspects of the problem, including the issue of more international funding and access to affordable drugs. These actions must be taken urgently if the Millennium Development Goal of halting and reversing the spread of this dreaded disease by 2015 is to be achieved.

The issue of terrorism has been of great preoccupation to our Organization in the past few years. Several instances of terrorist attacks continue to surface in different parts of the world, involving the loss of innocent lives and vast destruction of properties.

Nigeria reiterates its condemnation of terrorism in all its manifestations, and joins other Member States in the global determination to combat this veritable threat to national and international security. We support the work of the Counter-Terrorism Committee, and reaffirm our conviction that a comprehensive convention on international terrorism will constitute an important instrument for the protection of the individual and collective rights to life.

The situation in the Middle East, which we had hoped would improve with the adoption of the road map for a peaceful settlement of the conflict, has again

deteriorated. We call on the parties to halt the new cycle of violence — a cycle from which neither side stands to gain. We believe that any violation of the terms of the peace plan by either side does a great disservice to the Palestinians, as well as to the Israelis. We therefore appeal to both sides to demonstrate their full commitment to the implementation of the plan so as to create conditions for the peaceful coexistence of a Palestinian State, side by side with the State of Israel.

In conclusion, I would like to comment briefly on the issue of the reform of our Organization so as to make it more responsive to contemporary global needs and challenges. Nigeria has noted with dismay that obstacles continue to be placed in the way of the adoption of any of the constructive proposals for the reform of the Security Council. The changes that are being made in the Council's working methods to make it more open to non-members are appreciated, however, these are no more than marginal. I wish again to reiterate Nigeria's long held conviction that what is required is a more fundamental reform that would democratize the Security Council and thus reposition it to enable it to respond to issues of international peace and security in a more comprehensive, objective and effective manner. The overwhelming membership of our Organization demands no less in the interest of its continued relevance.

We cannot preach and endeavour to practise participation and inclusiveness at the national level while denying it at the global level of the United Nations, and expect that all will be well. Yet we have no substitute for this universal Organization. That point is now becoming evident in the context of the current situation of Iraq. Whatever the circumstances in which the Iraqi war occurred, the role played by the United Nations will be decisive in resolving the present impasse. Our Organization has now established itself in the post-conflict pacification of States. We can use that vast United Nations experience to our advantage in managing the current post-conflict situation in Iraq. We now have the possibility of an independent democratic Iraq, and we must not waste this opportunity.

One obvious point of disagreement relates to the issue of decision-making, both prior to and after the Iraqi war. This may be symptomatic of the deficiencies — to which I alluded — that are not conducive to the well-being of our Organization. Let us therefore undertake the necessary reforms in order to make our Organization work for all of us so that we

can deal effectively and adequately with the pressing issues of the twenty-first century.

The President On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Olusegun Obasanjo, President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Agenda item 9 (continued)

General debate

Address by The Right Honourable Jean Chrétien, Prime Minister of Canada

The President The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of Canada.

Mr. Jean Chrétien, Prime Minister of Canada, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency The Right Honourable Jean Chrétien, Prime Minister of Canada, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Chrétien (Canada) (*spoke in French*): It is a great pleasure for me to address this important gathering. I would like to congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the General Assembly and to wish you well.

As is well-known, Canada has always believed in a multilateral approach to global issues — not for ideological reasons, but because it is a proven way to enhance security and to resolve those over-arching problems that transcend national frameworks.

The present era provides us with enormous opportunities for action. We can improve health and extend life expectancy, especially in poor countries; we can safeguard security and the rights of citizens; and we can increase access to education and help people to fulfil their aspirations.

The present era also presents us with urgent challenges: protecting the environment; rolling back diseases such as AIDS and malaria; preventing conflict and ending impunity for crimes against humanity; putting a stop to terrorism and organized crime; and controlling weapons of mass destruction.

Each Government is responsible for taking action within its own borders. In this global era, however, such issues cannot be successfully addressed by States acting alone. Multilateral cooperation is indispensable to ensure the well-being of citizens and to protect them effectively from harm. We need only consider the fight against terrorism. None of us has ever believed that terrorism could be controlled, let alone stopped, without the cooperation of all of us. The task of drying up the sources of terrorist funding also requires coordination and effective legal regimes. Information-sharing is imperative if attacks are to be prevented.

The United Nations has been playing an extremely useful role in this fight. Since the tragic events of 11 September 2001, the Security Council has been undertaking an extensive effort in support of the fight against international terrorism.

We could also consider the issue of health. Distance from the source of new viruses no longer provides us with protection. The next virus may be just an aeroplane flight away. Multilateral cooperation is essential for the management of health threats. We risk disaster if we do not share with each other all information that is available to us and if we do not coordinate efforts to combat epidemics. Coordinated action is also required for development in poor countries and to ensure reasonable access to health care.

We need only consider, furthermore, the ongoing problem of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons. The proliferation of these weapons of mass destruction among States and terrorist groups represents a growing threat. Such proliferation must be prevented through coordination, the strict application of export controls, rigorous verification, the enforcement of multilateral treaties and other forms of collective action under international law.

We all recognize that the United Nations has enabled us to successfully address many international challenges. But we also recognize that we have failed in certain other cases. We have been slow to adapt the United Nations to changing circumstances. The time has come to begin bold renewal at the United Nations.

This morning, the Secretary-General set out proposals that are timely, necessary and courageous. I congratulate him on his remarkable statement, and I can reaffirm that Canada subscribes fully to the objectives that he proposes.

The United Nations remains the principal instrument for effective multilateral action. I call on my fellow leaders to make meaningful United Nations reform a priority.

(spoke in English)

We should not be pessimistic about our ability to succeed. Consider some United Nations successes: the 2000 Millennium Summit and, in Monterrey, Mexico, the 2002 International Conference on Financing for Development. We created a shared framework on setting priorities for more effective aid; we set targets and key principles; we spelled out mutual accountabilities for developed and developing countries. That spirit of accountability and shared responsibility also lies at the heart of the New Partnership for Africa's Development and of the Group of Eight Africa Action Plan. And it has led to policy initiatives with respect to market access and the availability of pharmaceutical drugs to poor countries. For instance, this year Canada eliminated virtually all tariffs and quotas on products from least developed countries.

At the same time, the outcome of the World Trade Organization meeting in Cancún is very, very worrisome. Agricultural subsidies of developed countries must be radically reduced to give developing countries — particularly in Africa — the chance to prosper. The developed world has an obligation to act, and to act quickly.

Colleagues, on no issue is progress more necessary or more urgent than on the protection of the innocent. Canada, in partnership with others, advocates putting the protection of people at the heart of the mandate of the Organization. Too often, conflicts are allowed to start, even when the whole world can see what the dreadful consequences will be. Too often, innocent civilians are left to their fate.

Next year will mark the tenth anniversary of the genocide in Rwanda. In all conscience, we must ask ourselves: are we any more ready now than we were then to respond to another Rwanda? I fear the answer, unfortunately, is no.

It was with our collective failures in Bosnia and Rwanda in mind that Canada sponsored the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty. The Commission has done excellent work,

and in its report, it argues that sovereignty entails responsibility as well as rights.

The most fundamental duty of a State is to protect its people. When a Government cannot or will not do so, the responsibility to protect them becomes temporarily a collective international responsibility. Some question that idea because they fear intervention on slight pretexts or with motives other than human protection. Others, owing to their own tragic experience, fear that there would be too little outside involvement. We need to reconcile those two concerns.

We believe — as does the Commission — that, in the face of great loss of life or ethnic cleansing, the international community has a moral responsibility to protect the vulnerable. The primary purpose must be to avert and end human suffering. No entity is more appropriate than the Security Council to authorize military action to protect the innocent. But the member States of the Council have sometimes failed the innocent. Past failures must motivate us to prepare better for future crises. We can reform how this place works, improve its effectiveness, enhance its relevance and inspire its participants.

Before closing, I wish to comment on some of the challenges to peace and security that we face. In Afghanistan, much has been achieved and much remains to be done. For our part, Canada has been engaged in the war on terrorism from the outset. We are the largest current military contributor to the International Security Assistance Force. We have pledged 250 million Canadian dollars for humanitarian assistance and reconstruction. We are committed to helping the Afghan people build a democratic, pluralistic society. In Iraq, we have also joined the international effort to help the Iraqi people. We have decided to contribute 300 million Canadian dollars, one of the largest single-country pledges we have ever made. We are encouraged that the members of the Security Council are exploring how to elaborate upon the United Nations role in the reconstruction and in progress towards Iraqi self-government.

The situation in the Middle East preoccupies us, as it does the entire international community. Innocent lives on both sides are being lost. Israeli families and Palestinian families fear for their children and for their future. Terrorism and violence — in whatever form, to advance whatever cause — simply creates more violence and takes even more innocent life.

For the international community, as for Israelis and Palestinians, despair is not an option. Our goal must remain a political solution based on two viable States, Israel and Palestine, within secure and recognized borders. We need to support Palestinian efforts to develop modern, transparent and responsible government. We need also to support those seeking to promote dialogue between Israelis and Palestinians in the search for practical solutions to the core issues. It is our responsibility to help those who are preparing for peace, which must one day come.

When the time is right, the international community must be able to offer a robust international presence that will guarantee the safety and security of Israel and of a Palestinian State, and we should be getting ready to do so now. In addition, we should be looking for lessons on how the international community has acted in other places to stop violence — as, for example, in Cyprus and in Kosovo.

Regional tensions, the war on terror and efforts at reconstruction in recent hot spots must, nevertheless, not distract us from continuing to help Africans realize their goals for trade and investment, democracy, human development and good governance.

In summary, multilateral cooperation remains indispensable. The United Nations remains at the heart of the multilateral system. New challenges demand new structures, and a historic opportunity has emerged.

Let us seize it, and let us realize the powerful idea that created the United Nations — the idea that nations can unite to save their people from the scourge of war. Let future generations say of us that we did not betray that idea — that we realized the potential of this great body, supported it, renewed it and re-energized it to better serve humanity.

Mr. Jean Chrétien, Prime Minister of Canada, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. José Durão Barroso, Prime Minister of the Portuguese Republic

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of the Portuguese Republic.

Mr. José Durão Barroso, Prime Minister of the Portuguese Republic, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. José Durão Barroso, Prime Minister of the Portuguese Republic, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Durão Barroso (Portugal) (*spoke in Portuguese. English text provided by the delegation*): In September of each year the Member States of the United Nations politically rediscover the Organization of which they are shareholders and beneficiaries.

The practice of business as usual should not mark this session of the General Assembly. The Secretary-General suggested that the heads of State and Government come to New York to make their contribution towards the strengthening of the United Nations. Portugal, as a committed member of this Organization, wishes to take part in this debate with a clear objective: to recognise, as does Kofi Annan, that the United Nations is an indispensable tool, and also to recognise that we must re-examine our practices and our working tools. Inactivity is not an option that this Organization should contemplate.

Rethinking the United Nations means, first of all, reaffirming and rethinking its Charter. Maintaining peace and international security will continue to be our main objective. But the reaffirmation of our faith in fundamental rights, in the dignity and worth of human beings, in equality between men and women and in equality between nations, is also part of our vision for the United Nations, as is the determination to promote, together, social progress and better living conditions for our peoples.

These objectives must not be overlooked when the Organization faces crises of confidence from time to time. The Secretary-General is correct in his encouragement to us to persevere. But a positive mental attitude is not enough. It is also essential that we do not ask more of the Organization than it can provide at any given moment. Otherwise, great expectations will lead to great disappointments.

Realism and pragmatism are necessary, but we must not lose sight of the ambitious objectives that this Organization is intended to serve. It is time for us to look at the United Nations as a reflection of what we are collectively, and not as a convenient scapegoat to mask the incapacity that the Member States sometimes still reveal when we should, but are unable, to act together.

We are also bound to understand, sooner or later, that we are facing common threats that require common responses. At the forefront of these threats is terrorism. In fact, a new type of terrorism has emerged: the terrorism of mass destruction that constitutes a crime against humanity; the terrorism that kills blindly and indiscriminately in New York, in Bali, in Casablanca and in Nairobi, in the name of non-values presented as values on ideological and religious grounds; and the terrorism that did not spare the United Nations itself, as we so tragically witnessed in Baghdad.

The crime which claimed the lives of Sergio Vieira de Mello and his collaborators was an attack on all of the values which the United Nations represents. It was an attack against us all. If there were still lingering doubts or illusions when some thought that terrorism was aimed essentially at some States, they disappeared in Baghdad.

It was not the Iraqi people who murdered Sergio Vieira de Mello and United Nations personnel. Terrorists are responsible for that crime. It is not the Iraqi people who are opposed to the United Nations presence in their country. Again, it is the terrorists. The United Nations must not bow to terrorism.

Portugal believes that the United Nations should have a central role in the definition of a global strategy for fighting terrorism, largely because maintaining international peace and security depends on the outcome of this fight. It is a fight we must undertake without losing our souls, that is to say, the values on which this Organization is built. It is for this reason that more security is necessary, but also more democracy, more dialogue between cultures and civilizations, more development, more and better environmental protection measures and a drastic reduction in poverty.

It is also vital that this fight be undertaken in the name of, and with respect for, our law — international law. The concept of the rule of law should have real global resonance. This is why we defend the improvement of the laws in force, namely through the negotiation of a global convention on international terrorism. But we must also bear in mind that international law will be irrelevant without the imposition of its norms, by force if necessary.

New challenges and new threats require innovative responses from the United Nations. It seems

blatantly obvious that the composition and decision-making process of the Security Council are obsolete. But changes are also needed in this Assembly, which each year automatically re-adopts hundreds of resolutions instead of adopting only those that are strictly necessary. As for the Economic and Social Council, the most that can be said is that the external impact of its actions is not perceptible, while the Trusteeship Council is nothing more than a relic devoid of any relevant objective.

In his report on the implementation of the Millennium Declaration (A/58/323), the Secretary-General focused on this point with particular insight. The proposals that he put forward should guide our thinking and joint action. But there is a particularly worrying aspect, on which we can, and indeed must, act without delay.

I am referring to the need for the establishment of a real preventive culture by the United Nations in matters of armed conflict. In this context, we agree with the relevance that the Secretary-General attributes to preventive diplomacy, to disarmament and non-proliferation measures, to peace-building, to respect for human rights, to good governance and to the development agenda.

In the final analysis, we must be fully aware that the usefulness of the United Nations will always be judged as a function of its capacity to avoid and handle conflicts. In the implementation of that mission, the fundamental role lies with the Security Council, which has, over the years, authorized various peacekeeping operations. The overall result has been positive. Portugal has contributed significantly to those operations and remains available to continue to collaborate with the United Nations.

But conditions on the ground are not always clear-cut, and it is not always possible to separate what is and what is not a conflict, and what would justify or not an intervention by the Security Council. There is an immense grey area that can be perilous in pre-conflict and post-conflict situations.

We must also create the tools for dealing with countries and situations that do not need support in terms of security, namely through a peacekeeping operation. The intervention of the United Nations at the critical phase of a conflict, followed by a premature withdrawal, may well end in failure, which will

essentially lead to the waste of the investment made by the international community up to that point.

This assessment recommends, for example, that the United Nations continue to monitor closely the situation in East Timor. It is a country whose democratic institutions are still in the consolidation phase. Without a tradition of self-government, it has made uncommonly rapid progress in several areas but is still in need of our help and attention. If we truly want East Timor to be a real success story for the United Nations, it is important to give the people of East Timor time to consolidate their institutions.

However, in other cases in which a peace operation is not yet justified and where State institutions are fragile, where there is an enormous lack of basic services and development has not taken off, it is advisable to have a strong United Nations presence, coordinated on the ground by the Secretary-General.

I would also like to take this opportunity to mention Guinea-Bissau, which is frequently overlooked and which once again requires our attention. Having avoided falling into a destructive spiral as has happened to so many countries in the region, that country is still fighting to recover. It must be helped, not ignored. They are a people who can and should be helped by the international community — and indeed deserve to be. For that reason, we support the efforts of the Secretary-General on behalf of democracy and development and applaud the original contribution of the Economic and Social Council.

Under the present conditions, the Security Council does not take into account all the factors involved in prevention: security, nation building and development. Each one follows a more or less independent path.

There is one other factor to add: the Council is fully absorbed with the management of the most pressing matters on the international agenda and at times demonstrates a notorious lack of attention to some countries in pre- or post-conflict situations.

We believe there is a solid case for advocating the creation of a new institutional mechanism: a new commission with the mandate to routinely monitor cases of conflict-prevention and the creation of conditions for peace and development. In conjunction with the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council, which would both preserve their respective

areas of competence, this commission could identify and deal with the most pressing needs. For each of the countries in situations of risk, it would draw up integrated strategies allying the objectives of security and strengthening institutions and economic and social development. While other decisions of great importance are being prepared, we can — and should — begin here to deal with pre- and post-conflict situations.

It is not enough for the United Nations to affirm its relevance. It is absolutely indispensable that the Organization is seen as relevant by the Member States and that States act accordingly. The credibility of the Organization must not be questioned. Otherwise its functioning and effectiveness may be severely compromised.

Iraq is undoubtedly the case that requires of us all, in particular the members of the Security Council, that we carefully evaluate the Organization's capacity for action. A collective turn of the page is necessary, since there is no valid alternative to a policy that enables the Iraqi people to freely define their system of Government and political leadership and that maintains the country's political and territorial integrity. To build a democratic society on the ruins of one of the most violent dictatorships of the past century is a challenge the international community must not shrink. It is a task that demands much realism with respect to the difficulties to be confronted.

For that very reason, Portugal has always been in favour of the progressive involvement of the United Nations in Iraq's stabilization process, with a corresponding gradual transfer of power to Iraqi representatives. We also encourage the Security Council to come to a rapid understanding on this matter. For our part, we are already taking concrete steps, including in the security field, to support all those that are already locally assisting the Iraqi people to live in freedom.

A larger commitment by the international community is indispensable for resuming the Middle East peace process. The road map cannot be shelved. It is up to us to demand a proactive attitude from all interested parties. Also, we should not be indifferent to the Palestinian people's legitimate desire for liberty and self-determination. Israel and Palestine will have to coexist in peace and in security, within recognized borders. But here again, terrorism, which only benefits

the enemies of peace, must be condemned without ambiguity.

Great challenges generate great opportunities. It is up to us, the Members of the United Nations, to create the conditions that will allow this Organization to function in accordance with its potential and the ideas that were an integral part of its creation. Those ideas remain valid, and Portugal stands ready to give its contribution.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of the Portuguese Republic for the statement he has just made.

Mr. José Durão Barroso, Prime Minister of the Portuguese Republic, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Kenny Davis Anthony, Prime Minister, Minister for Finance, Planning, Information and the Public Service of Saint Lucia

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister, Minister for Finance, Planning, Information and the Public Service of Saint Lucia.

Mr. Kenny Davis Anthony, Prime Minister of Saint Lucia, Minister for Finance, Planning, Information and the Public Service, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency the Honourable Kenny Davis Anthony, the Prime Minister, Minister for Finance, Planning, Information and the Public Service of Saint Lucia, and in inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Anthony (Saint Lucia): It is neither pride nor the prospect of privilege that moves us to assume the Presidency of the United Nations General Assembly but a certain determination that is the unspoken strength of islands. Nor is it merely that we are honoured — though indeed we are — but that we also feel worthy, as worthy as any other member of this community and determined to make our contribution to the progress of humanity and the welfare of the world. Saint Lucia recognizes and appreciates that this Presidency became a reality only with the support of the Latin American and Caribbean family.

Our preoccupation is not with size, sovereignty or power but with people, and by this measure we are not small, nor are we just an island, for we do not stand alone. We stand as one Member of this Organization, proud of the legacy and the vision that we can offer the world. We assume this role because we wish to offer that vision to the world — because it is larger than our 238 square miles and larger than our population of 159,000 people. It is a vision we wish to place at the service of humanity.

It is our hope that Saint Lucia's presidency will offer a fresh perspective, an alternative view, and a different, but not discordant, voice to the heart of the Assembly. As such, the people and the Government of Saint Lucia express both their appreciation and their determination to the members of this international community — appreciation for the faith and trust bestowed upon us with the presidency of this institution, and determination that we shall not fail it, but be judged equal to the task before us. If it is a task of Herculean proportion, then we will face it with equal confidence, certain that the rebuilding of our broken humanity is a matter which we encounter in the company of equally resolute and undaunted partners.

Since the end of the cold war, the legitimacy, credibility and relevance of this time-honoured institution have never been so questioned as they are today. The United Nations Millennium Declaration was designed to revive the dying pulse of all humanity but has itself become comatose. Indeed, Secretary-General Kofi Annan was moved to state that:

"It is uncertain whether the consensus and the vision that the Millennium Declaration expressed are still intact."

Saint Lucia therefore calls on the international community to heed the appeal of our Secretary-General to seek balance between the imperatives of military security and human security. In the interest of redistributive justice, global peace and security, the developed countries must not renege on their commitments to the developing world in the areas of trade, debt relief and aid.

The Millennium Declaration goal of halving global poverty is receding into nothingness, but it can be rescued if developed countries make good on their pledges. Moreover, we might challenge ourselves beyond merely halving global poverty, by aspiring to its virtual elimination. By now, it should be clear to us

all that poverty issues are inseparable from human rights issues, as are environmental issues from economic and political development issues. National security and international stability can be realized only where there is justice.

It was the prophet Isaiah who reminded us that if mankind is brought low, everyone will be humbled. Yet if we, the international community, retreat from the ideals of the creation of a greater humanity, we would also be retreating from the core values and principles enshrined within the United Nations Charter. More importantly, we would be tacitly endorsing the return and consolidation of a global uncivil society — the symptoms of which are already manifest within our global society. Religious intolerance, tribal aggression and civil war continue to ravage many parts of our planet. Among the victims are the poor, the marginalized and the vulnerable — often women and children, who play no part in the making of war but find themselves stripped of their human dignity and basic human rights. Terrorist attacks in Bali, Kenya, Saudi Arabia and Baghdad add to our symptoms of impending rupture.

The arteries of conscience are becoming hardened by the frequency of wanton violence, yet on occasion there are incidents that shock our sensibilities. The murder of Sergio Vieira de Mello and other United Nations colleagues reminds us of the mindless horror at the heart of that darkness. Saint Lucia joins the international community in expressing sympathy to their families, and we reiterate our profound respect to those international workers who are so willing to make the ultimate sacrifice to extend humanitarian assistance, security and comfort to those in peril and in need.

In this environment, it is essential that we maintain a United Nations which steadfastly adheres to its original core values. Saint Lucia will resist any attempt to de-legitimize the United Nations system. Any strategy which claims to embrace peace, security and justice and yet excludes the United Nations belies a flawed and unreal conception of world affairs. This Organization has been instrumental in the preservation of the nation-State within a framework of binding relationships among Governments. More importantly, the United Nations has been a devoted guardian of individual rights and freedoms. Saint Lucia maintains that the United Nations, precisely because of its

diversity, is the only organization with the political and moral legitimacy to deal adequately with global issues.

This universal body — this United Nations — has no other choice but to heed the lessons of the past and the wisdom of the ages in its attempt to better serve humanity. When our predecessor organization, the League of Nations, was discarded as irrelevant, we witnessed the advance of disorder and human catastrophe on a scale never before envisioned. If we stand idly by now, while this time-honoured institution is rendered irrelevant and toothless, we will have commissioned an epitaph for humanity.

Saint Lucia therefore calls for the completion of the efforts at reforming the Security Council to better reflect the realities of this new century and to make it more representative — more democratic, legitimate and transparent. The existing veto system is too easily influenced by national interests to address serious issues afflicting humankind. If a coalition of the willing could be assembled for war, then surely we can also gather a coalition of the willing to address the problems of poverty, disease, illiteracy, hunger, and trade imbalances. There can be no sanitizing of one corner of the globe while contagion, despair and desperation fester elsewhere. There is no security for the one while insecurity plagues the other.

But, ultimately, the strength of the United Nations must come from the political will of the Member States — a political will that must accept that everyone should adhere to, abide by, and implement all the decisions taken and resolutions adopted by the Organization. We cannot, in the name of national interest, observe only some resolutions and expect to have a strong United Nations.

The United Nations cannot be strengthened if we do not have the political will to accept that its activities cannot be dictated by the agendas of a few powerful States. It must embrace, in equal measure, the concerns of the small and the weak that are the majority of its Members. No single State, by virtue of its economic or military might, should determine, on its own, the obligations and responsibilities of the rest of humanity.

"Muscular unilateralism" and the emerging doctrine of diplomatic unilateralism cannot be the preferred approach to serious global issues. Exceptionalism within the international system is certain to fragment international cooperation, making it

less likely that countries will forgo aspects of national sovereignty in the interest of the common good.

It has become abundantly clear that the international community will not succeed in its war against terrorism if it fails to address root causes. The current war on terrorism is designed to capture, confine or eliminate existing terrorist networks without addressing the causes of terrorism. Terrorism does not stem simply from the arrogance and madness of a few dictators and misguided fanatics; it is also the result of deep-seated inequity and, sometimes, bigotry. If the status quo denies opportunity, freedom and fulfilment to those who hunger and dwell in despair, the appeal of chaos and extremism as an avenue to change becomes that much more attractive. If, on the other hand, we perceive that the world order works in the interests of all of us, there will be a universal commitment to sustain that order. Consequently, it is imperative that the international community jointly address economic injustice and political exclusion as common enemies of us all.

Your assumption, Sir, of the presidency of this institution at this time, as a representative of a small island developing State — one of the smallest Members of the United Nations — is both a tribute to the democratic principles of the United Nations and a signal of the need to conclude the process of revitalizing the work of the General Assembly. We must conquer delay, procrastination, repetition and inaction.

Many years have passed since deliberations on the reform of the Security Council began; and yet there is no end in sight. Consultations on the revitalization of the General Assembly first began 13 years ago, and on that issue, too, there is no end in sight.

For some reason, the United Nations seems to enjoy operating in decades. We create decades for our programmes, and when we fail to take action in a particular decade, we simply declare another decade. And so the cycle continues — for decades. This body can no longer afford the luxury of "decade syndrome", compounded as it is by bureaucratic operations bound by tradition and habit.

We must be extremely proactive on the question of the revitalization of the General Assembly. Saint Lucia therefore wishes to propose that during this session we review all the draft resolutions before us, and determine which need to be consigned to the

record books and which merit the continued attention of the Assembly. We need to restructure the time frame, as well as the working methods, of the Assembly and its Main Committees, so as to make more productive use of an entire year, rather than engaging in a three-month frenzy, of activities. Furthermore, we should consider making the agendas of the Main Committees and the Assembly more relevant to the general debate. It is our view that these should flow from the themes enunciated at the general debate.

The United Nations must not compromise its role in global economic governance and development. Saint Lucia calls for Members to resist attempts to dilute the development agenda through cuts and freezes of regular and core budget allocations.

Saint Lucia reiterates the need for reform of the system of global economic governance so as to allow for fair trade and special and differential treatment for developing countries. The current global governance system has failed many small States by eliminating commodity protocols and the quota and price preferences that sustain small economies. Unfortunately, they have been replaced by the conspicuous indifference of neo-liberal economic practice. This has contributed to the decimation of many Caribbean economies. It is Saint Lucia's earnest plea that the distortions in farm trade about which — despite their prevalence — discussion is conspicuously avoided, will be treated in a manner reflective of the redistributive priorities of this Organization. We are therefore determined that a more inclusive and transparent global governance system should hold as sacred the goals and aspirations of those of us in the developing world who strive against all odds.

Among the most vulnerable countries in the world today are some of the territories that are on the United Nations list of Non-Self-Governing Territories. These countries, the majority of which are small island States in the Caribbean and the Pacific, have yet to exercise the right to self-determination. In the words of the Secretary-General, it is time for the United Nations to bring to a close this colonial chapter of history.

We therefore welcome the cooperation that the Special Committee of 24 on decolonization has recently been receiving from the administering Powers of those Territories and the advances that have consequently been made in the work of the Committee.

We further welcome the negotiations that have just begun, for the first time, between the Special Committee and the United Kingdom on the process of decolonization in the Caribbean. We look forward to continued cooperation with the administering Powers so that the goal of self-determination for all of these Territories can be achieved in less than a decade.

We believe that this General Assembly presidency is both symbolic and strategic — not just for ourselves, but for this Organization and the revitalization of its development agenda. That a small developing country should aspire to and attain such high office is a testament to the magnanimity of this noble institution. It is an opportunity to demonstrate that global equity and universal democracy remain meaningful constructs of the world community.

Our voice can be ignored or it can be heeded, but it will not be silenced. The choice of an appropriate response rests with this community. Our presence here, however, is a manifestation of our belief that humanity demands conscious renewal — renewal to guarantee that the international community resists war, remembers the poor and is prepared to give tangible meaning to the Charter, to which we all subscribe as responsible members of the world community.

But there can be no renewal if faith in the United Nations system is not also restored and retained. The United Nations must remain as the moral epicentre of world politics. Any re-conceptualization of the architecture of global governance that excludes the United Nations will leave the world weaker, more divided, vulnerable and less secure. This cannot and should not be our legacy to future generations, who will judge us not by our words or espoused principles, but by the actions we employ to render this world fit for human habitation.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister, Minister for Finance, Planning, Information and the Public Service of Saint Lucia for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Kenny Davis Anthony, Prime Minister, Minister for Finance, Planning, Information and the Public Service of Saint Lucia, was escorted from the rostrum.

Mr. Chimunthu Banda (Malawi), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Address by His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Prime Minister of Kuwait

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of Kuwait.

Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Prime Minister of Kuwait, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Prime Minister of the State of Kuwait, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah (Kuwait) (spoke in Arabic): It gives me pleasure to begin my statement by congratulating the President, both personally and as representative of his country, Saint Lucia, on his election as President of the General Assembly at its fifty-eighth session. Given his skills and experience, we are confident that he will competently lead our deliberations as we consider the pressing global issues that face the Organization at this critical time. He may be assured of my delegation's readiness to fully cooperate with him in order to ensure the successful fulfilment of his mandate. I wish also to pay tribute to his predecessor, Mr. Jan Kavan, for his active and positive role and for his remarkable contribution to the promotion of international cooperation.

In addition, I wish to express once again our appreciation and gratitude to the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, for his tireless efforts to bring peace and stability to the various troubled regions throughout the world. Mr. Annan deserves special tribute for his extraordinary performance in maintaining the integrity of the United Nations and its leading role in moving the global agenda forward, despite the enormous challenges and high risks facing the Organization and its personnel. The terrorist attack against the United Nations office in Baghdad last month, which claimed the lives of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Sergio Vieira de Mello, and of a number of his colleagues, is yet further clear testimony of those challenging difficulties and immense dangers. Another similar terrorist attack occurred two days ago, and again the target was the United Nations presence in Iraq.

From this rostrum, I reiterate our condemnation of that terrorist act and of all other similar acts that

have occurred in the cities of Baghdad and Najaf. Those attacks claimed the lives of highly respected religious leaders and symbols and other innocent victims. We believe that such acts are aimed not only at the underpinnings of security, of stability and of the people's sense of confidence, but also at the noble values that we all seek to restore and consolidate in brotherly Iraq.

Perhaps the most appropriate and resolute response to such criminal acts is a two-track approach. The United Nations, together with the international Powers interested in the Iraqi question who are also seeking to establish security and stability in Iraq, should stay the course and resolutely face the continuing violence there. In the meantime, further efforts should focus on enabling the Iraqi people to consolidate national legitimacy and to develop national institutions. In parallel, efforts for Iraq's reconstruction should be intensified in order to make up for many long years of deprivation, oppression, destruction and mismanagement painfully endured by the Iraqi people under the now-defunct regime that was removed by concerted international action anchored in Security Council resolutions related to Iraq's liberation.

Kuwait strongly condemns the inhuman crimes and practices perpetrated by the previous regime in Iraq. The most recent manifestation of those atrocities was the discovery of numerous mass-grave sites in various parts of the country. Those graves contained the remains of thousands of innocent human beings — particularly those of Kuwaitis and third-country nationals — among which 33 were identified by forensic experts as having been prisoners who were executed by shooting in 1991 and 1992. That is further proof of the regime's brutality and of its total disregard for international treaties and for the norms of international humanitarian law. Above and beyond the crimes themselves, for the past 13 years the regime persistently denied any knowledge of those prisoners' whereabouts. It also ignored relevant decisions of the Security Council and of other international and regional organizations calling for its cooperation in disclosing the fate of those victims, only aggravating their relatives' anguish.

Having said that, I should like to add that Kuwait will pursue its efforts, in coordination with the United Nations, the International Committee of the Red Cross, the Tripartite Commission, the interim Coalition Authority and the citizens of Iraq, to determine the fate

of the remaining Kuwaiti and third-country prisoners and detainees. Furthermore, we shall help in hunting down the perpetrators in order to bring them to justice for the crimes they committed against those innocent, defenceless victims.

Responding to its national and legal obligations, Kuwait joined the coalition forces in their endeavour to enforce Security Council resolutions regarding Iraq. Thus, we provided all possible facilities within the framework of that legal structure, which eventually led to Iraq's salvation from an oppressive, tyrannical regime. Let me take this opportunity to say that we welcome that regime's removal from Iraq. We congratulate the brotherly people of Iraq on their liberation, and we wish them prosperity in a secure and stable Iraq.

In addition, Kuwait welcomes the Security Council's adoption of resolutions 1483 (2003) and 1500 (2003), on Iraq. We also invite United Nations Member States to join the ongoing international efforts to restore security and stability to Iraq. That will help the people of Iraq to rebuild their homeland and to re-establish the political and constitutional institutions of a national Government. In that regard, we emphasize the central and significant role of the United Nations in this political process.

Immediately after the collapse of the former regime in Iraq, Kuwait reached out to the brotherly people of Iraq with a wide array of humanitarian assistance. Our response came in the spirit of our common Arab and Islamic heritage. Kuwait rushed material and financial aid to several local and international organizations, as well as to the United Nations specialized agencies operating in Iraq. We also contributed directly to the restoration of electrical power, health care, educational services and water supplies to various areas in the country. In addition, Kuwait set up a humanitarian operations centre to facilitate and coordinate relief aid activities and international emergency relief efforts to deliver aid to Iraq. Kuwait will continue its efforts to ensure the delivery of all kinds of assistance, which we hope will alleviate the suffering of the brotherly people of Iraq.

Now it is our fervent hope that Iraq will safely cross the dire straits through which it is passing and that it will recover its security and stability and will safeguard its independence and territorial integrity. All that will enable the people of Iraq to recommit their

resources and energies to their country's reconstruction so that Iraq will reclaim its legitimate and natural status in the region and in the world. Indeed, we are fully confident that Iraq will overcome the challenges of this critical stage of its history, because it is endowed with enormous natural riches, a profound cultural heritage and skilled human resources.

The Government and people of Kuwait will stand with Iraq at this stage and we look forward to enjoying good, brotherly relations with a free and united Iraq. We hope that our bilateral relations will be characterized by mutual trust, respect and good-neighbourliness, and governed by established treaties and United Nations resolutions. This will help us leave the past behind and shift our focus onto building a better future that will contribute to enhancing security and stability in the region.

Since the tragic events of 11 September 2001 that struck the United States, the phenomenon of terrorism has dominated the global agenda. Kuwait strongly condemned those terrorist acts and all similar crimes committed in other countries. These are horrendous acts of terrorism that have created new realities on the international scene, including a universal conviction that terrorism in its pernicious manifestations is actually an evil not exclusively associated with one nation, religion or culture. All of us also realize that the fight against this evil is an international responsibility to be borne by all Member States, not just one State or a certain group of States. Therefore, we maintain that the United Nations remains the most appropriate forum for examining this issue and developing the most effective means to combat and eventually to stem it. To that end, the universal signature, endorsement and enforcement by all Member States of the 12 international agreements relating to terrorism would represent a real breakthrough in ensuring the deployment of the most effective means to contain and eliminate this pandemic.

As Kuwait firmly reiterates its categorical rejection of terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, as well as its renunciation of all acts of violence and extremism, it condemns the vicious orchestrated campaign being waged against a sister State — the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia — by some American media agencies. Instead, we commend Saudi Arabia for its concrete and significant contributions to the global campaign against terrorism, bearing in mind the fact that Saudi Arabia itself has been the target of

terrorists and has suffered as a result. Kuwait fully endorses all measures taken by the Saudi Government in its drive to eliminate terrorism and to consolidate regional security and stability.

In the same context, Kuwait will maintain its efforts, in coordination with the States of the region and the United Nations, to fight terrorism and to further strengthen the measures it has enforced in order completely to fulfil its international obligations, especially those set forth in Security Council resolution 1373 (2001).

Thirty-six years have passed since the oppressive Israeli occupation of the land of the Palestinian people, who continue to suffer an ongoing decline in their economic and social living conditions as a result of Israel's policies and practices, which contravene international and humanitarian laws and norms. Kuwait is following with grave concern the recent escalation in the occupied Palestinian territories. Despite the intense international efforts led by the Quartet, which yielded the road map for the settlement of the conflict within a specific time frame with a view to the attainment by the Palestinian people of their legitimate political rights, Israel persists in its policy of backtracking on its commitments. In fact, it deliberately undermines every promising initiative while paying no heed to the potential consequences of the perpetuation of the cycle of violence, rising tension and instability throughout the region. Against this backdrop, the question of deploying an international monitoring force to ensure scrupulous compliance with ceasefire arrangements is more pressing than ever.

While Kuwait renews its commitment to fully supporting the struggle of the Palestinian people to attain all their full legitimate political rights, including the establishment of their independent State on their national territory, with Jerusalem as its capital, we demand that the Israeli Government commit itself to implementing the resolution adopted last Friday by the General Assembly at its tenth emergency special session and reverse its decision to remove the President of the Palestinian Authority. In the same context, we demand that the Israeli Government fulfil its obligations and pledges set out in relevant United Nations resolutions, primarily Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973); the land for peace formula; the bilateral accords signed with the Palestinian Authority in the context of the peace

process; and the road map in all its provisions and requirements.

In addition, Israel must abandon forthwith its policies of isolating local communities and denying them food supplies, incursions, destruction of physical infrastructures, demolition of homes and arbitrary round-ups and arrests. Israel must also stop its construction of the separation wall and of settlements. It should also release all Palestinian detainees. Recent developments on the ground prove that these policies and practices will not fulfil Israel's goals. Rather, they will fuel the sentiments of hostility towards Israel. They will also reinforce the sense of despair and undermine the Palestinians' prospects for living in freedom and dignity, thus forcing them to pursue the course of national struggle and resistance of occupation. Furthermore, Israel must ultimately withdraw from all the Arab territories it occupied in 1967 as a prerequisite for building the just, permanent and comprehensive peace for which we all yearn.

At the regional level, and in line with Kuwait's compliance with the principles of the Charter of the United Nations, especially Article 2, which stresses the principle of peaceful settlement of disputes, we call on the Islamic Republic of Iran and the United Arab Emirates to maintain their mutual visits and to deepen bilateral talks with a view to resolving their dispute over the three islands. It is our hope that the resolution of the current dispute will strengthen relations between the two countries and the consolidation of security and stability in the region. In this regard, Kuwait, in its forthcoming chairmanship of the Gulf Cooperation Council, will spare no effort to strengthen all aspects of political, security and economic cooperation among the States of the region. Furthermore, Kuwait, in cooperation and coordination with the United Nations and the regional players, will explore the activation and development of regional security arrangements with interested countries of the region.

Today's world is different in many ways from the world of several years ago. The trade and economic boundaries of States are rapidly disappearing. Cultural interaction and relations among various societies is expanding as a result of the immense achievements in information and communications technologies. However, such technologies have had some negative implications that cannot be brushed aside. Thus, we are now seeing an increasing marginalization of the majority of the developing countries, whose economies

now suffer from a growing set of problems that jeopardize their prospects for meaningful development.

In an attempt to face up to these challenges, which hamper world economic growth, a series of United Nations meetings were convened to address the impediments to global economic growth. Thus, the World Summit on Sustainable Development, held in South Africa, and the International Conference on Financing for Development, held in Mexico, developed a framework of action for ensuring equity and fair interdependence and cooperation between the North and the South. Also, specific guidelines and obligations were set for all stakeholders to achieve a more equitable balance in economic relations. At this juncture, we would therefore call on the developed nations to meet their partnership obligations. These include, *inter alia*, adequate flows of financial and technical aid to the developing countries; the alleviation of the debt burden and cancellation of the debts of the least developed countries; the removal of customs restrictions on flows of goods from the developing countries into world markets; and an exchange of information and expertise that would help developing countries to build and modernize their national institutions.

To this end, Kuwait, for its part, reaffirms its commitment to continue to provide development and financial assistance to developing countries. Our channels will either include the United Nations programmes, funds, agencies and other multilateral organizations or the Kuwait Fund for Economic Development, which has a sterling track record of aiding and financing a wide range of development projects and programmes in more than 100 developing countries across the globe.

As we are still in the early years of a new century, it is our hope that all of us will draw the right lessons from our collective experiences of the past. Only through common action can humankind face the challenges of the present in order to fashion a better future that offers future generations the hope of living in freedom and dignity.

Let us join hands to fulfil our common vision of a life in which law and order prevail — a life governed by the values and principles of freedom, justice and equality for all; a life that upholds the concept of partnership and cooperation as the shortest path to security, stability and peace in the world.

His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Prime Minister of Kuwait, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency, Mr. Louis Michel, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Belgium.

Mr. Michel (Belgium) (spoke in French): I would like at the outset to extend my sincerest congratulations to you, Sir, on your accession to the presidency of the General Assembly. It comes at a particularly difficult time, which I might even describe as painful, in the history of our Organization.

Indeed, the past year has gravely challenged the capacities of the United Nations to manage the crisis in Iraq to its conclusion, a country to which it was accountable. It saw the pre-eminent role for the maintenance of international peace and security of this institution, symbol of multilateralism and stability, called into question.

Yet, it is not our institution's intrinsic capacity that is the cause of its powerlessness. It is essentially its Members' lack of political determination. We cannot elude this vital debate for a peaceful, more harmonious and more just future indefinitely. Sooner or later, we must answer the essential question: How can we ensure that all Member States of the United Nations will be prepared to accept the binding nature of Security Council endorsements of military action prior to engaging in it?

To make myself perfectly clear, and to avoid any misunderstanding, the question that I ask is as follows: What reforms need to be made to the Organization's operations to placate the often-understandable apprehension or reticence of those who, because they assume specific political responsibilities, refuse to submit their geostrategic options to the rules of our Organization? As long as we remain unable to answer that question, we will continue to live in doubt and uncertainty, if not in helplessness. It is not a question of advocating an institutional shake-up of the Organization, rather debate should enable us to overcome the all-too-many misunderstandings that undermine the credibility of our shared instrument, and from which we can draw conclusions that will help us to make the Organization's mechanisms more credible and up to date. The Security Council was founded on the recognition of the particular responsibility and role of some of our Members, and I fully subscribe to it.

But should we not integrate new perspectives into this state of affairs, such as the regional dimension, present geopolitical facts and also new threats?

This is in no way meant to contest the specific influence of some of those involved in international peace and security management. Rather, our concerted support could help accompany, legitimize and strengthen their approach and their effectiveness, thanks to the indisputably added value of multilateral dynamics. In many cases, this would avoid taking unnecessary risks and misunderstandings. In that regard, I think that, given its role as a global actor, the European Union greatly deserves a permanent seat on the Security Council on its own behalf.

It is this conviction that has inspired my country's position on the Iraq crisis. But now is not the time to determine who was right or who was wrong. All sides clearly had their reasons. One can only respect them for it.

But it is now necessary to contribute to the re-establishment of stability and ensure Iraq's reconstruction. That is the responsibility of us all, for it concerns a region neighbouring Europe, and we cannot tolerate, if only for the sake of our own security, increased instability or the persistence of an uncontrolled spiral of violence that feeds resentment towards the international community, which, as history has taught us, constitutes the principal breeding ground for terrorism.

It is thus necessary to stop the violence as quickly as possible. To this end, I share the opinion of the Secretary-General and of many among us. It is necessary to restore as quickly as possible responsibility for governing Iraq to the people of Iraq. The return to sovereignty, under the watchful eye of the United Nations and of the international community as a whole, is capable of providing the salutary shock needed to reverse the current trend. We must convince the Iraqi people that national union, the re-establishment of State authority and economic recovery are accessible and at hand. This of course does not imply that the international community should demobilize. A strong military force in Iraq will still be necessary for some time to guarantee stability. It is of course up to the United States to assume its management. But from now on this presence must not be regarded as designed to occupy the country, but rather as a way to assist in the reconstruction process.

for the sake of the Iraqi people. The Security Council resolution that is currently under discussion must create this prospect so as to insure broad participation by the international community.

The United Nations has a central role to play in accompanying the political reconstruction process in Iraq, even if the tragic events of August have shown how risky and vulnerable that process is. However, such a role requires a clear mandate and sufficient means.

I wish to renew my sincerest condolences to the Secretary-General, to the bereaved families and to colleagues, and express my high regard and admiration for all the United Nations staff members for their involvement, their selflessness and the sacrifices that they accept so steadfastly.

The principal security threat is the uncontrollable proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their potential use by some States in breach of minimal ethical standards or by certain terrorist movements. That threat is serious. We must each confront the threat together, by shouldering our fair share of the actions undertaken.

The European Union and its member States currently possess an essential document which deals with the European security strategy. It should enable us, as Javier Solana quite recently reminded us in Brussels, to plot a European chart of the challenges facing this world to better guarantee the effectiveness of our collective security system. Belgium will actively participate in this endeavour.

Furthermore, we fully share the international community's concerns about the nuclear programme of North Korea. We strongly call upon North Korea to abide by its previous international commitments. We are grateful to China for having offered a useful format for discussion in this respect.

As for Iran, I trust that through a sustained and constructive dialogue it will meet the expectations of the international community and respond to the requests of the International Atomic Energy Agency.

Belgium will continue to participate in a determined and proactive way in the international efforts that were initiated two years ago to track down terrorism. In Belgium, there is no sanctuary for terrorism, nor will there ever be. Nevertheless, the fight against terrorism should not be used as an abusive

justification for actions that would undermine the democratic quality and the sacred principles of the rule of law.

Furthermore, I am not one of those who believe that the military option is the exclusive answer, although obviously it should not be excluded. Much more fundamentally, we need to systematically attack the root causes of a phenomenon that is often rooted in the feeling of powerlessness or in feelings of real or perceived injustice.

For this reason, Belgium will also continue to support, together with its European partners, the action of the Quartet for the re-establishment of peace between Israel and the Palestinian Authority. To achieve that goal, it is necessary that Palestinians decide unambiguously to renounce the toleration of blind violence and that Israel, in the same spirit, stop favouring the use of force.

One has the impression that, as difficulties pile up, we have fallen back into the traps of Oslo: a gradualism of small steps and a too-pronounced reliance on sequencing. The road map prescribes parallel advances on the security, political and economic paths. From each side, we need to obtain bolder measures and the acceptance of the risks these imply. There is no alternative to the road map. It has not yet been implemented seriously. We believe it is particularly urgent to create a credible, on-site verification mechanism.

It is in Africa, particularly in Central Africa, that my country commits itself in the most determined way to the restoration of peace and stability. We are encouraged by the successful installation of a transitional Government in Kinshasa that now brings together all the parties. Now, State structures have to be restored and good governance has to be introduced in order to allow for the return of foreign aid and investment. The persisting violence in the east of the country must end.

In this context, I wish to mention the remarkable efforts by the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC). I am particularly happy about the success of Operation Artemis. Apart from restoring security in Bunia, this operation has given MONUC the thrust it needed to be able to face up to the challenges of its new mandate.

Now, priority must be given to the preparation of elections in order to grant the Democratic Republic of the Congo a new start on a solid basis and to consolidate its restored territorial integrity. Belgium will be present at all levels and in every phase of this process. But I wish to insist on the fact that the Democratic Republic of the Congo needs the determined commitment of all the instruments of our community. It would be unforgivable not to forge, here and now, the conditions for a complete stabilization of the entire region.

We also need to help Rwanda to continue its national reconciliation efforts, which are indispensable in order to guarantee sustainable stability in that fragile country. I am convinced the recent elections will contribute to this goal.

As for Burundi, the implementation of the Arusha Agreements must continue, and the rebels have to be convinced that they should join this process. My country looks forward to participating actively in the new action on Burundi decided by the Economic and Social Council. We hope that will help Burundi to break through its isolation within the international community.

Finally, my country closely follows the efforts by the United Nations to reactivate the project for a Great Lakes conference, which should seal the re-establishment of peaceful relations and the development of cross-border cooperation among the countries of the region.

The credibility of the United Nations does not depend only on its willingness and capacity to manage crises. It also depends on its capacity to respond to the expectations of men, women and children all over the world, who are directly or indirectly confronted with imbalances and injustice whose causes and solutions both are found only at the global level. It is essential to master globalization, develop the promises it offers and correct its excesses.

It is clear that, in accordance with the analysis of the Secretary-General, this challenge requires fundamental reflection on the architecture of the major instruments of development. That demands openness of mind and should not exclude any option from the start. Has not the time come to reinforce the capacity of the United Nations to act effectively in this field? I wish to repeat a question that I raised at the World Trade Organization Ministerial Conference in Cancun.

Should we not, for example, create a real Economic and Social Security Council, which would derive its legitimacy and efficiency from law and which would have the same power in the management of economic, social and environmental policies as the Security Council has on issues of peace? That is my conviction, especially since those fields form the requisite backdrop to achieving stability and security.

The Economic and Social Council needs to be reformed to give it a more decisive operational role in the control of a world organization based on universal principles of equity. This goal should lead to broad and balanced synergies between international organizations such as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the World Trade Organization and the International Labour Organization, which should really become instruments of the same project.

The founding principles of such a concept exist already and are being applied in certain countries, such as in mine. I am referring more specifically to fundamental labour standards such as the freedom of unions, the prohibition of child labour and forced labour and the right to quality employment, as well as environmental obligations, which are vital for sustainable development. I am also thinking of the need to exclude services of general interest from the market sphere.

To conclude, it seems to me that such an ambition would opportunely translate the tremendous hope generated by the Millennium Summit. The Millennium Declaration clearly defined the goals at our level. I am pleased with the decision of the General Assembly to make the five-year review of the Millennium Summit in 2005 into an important event, which I think should be a summit of heads of State and Government. That summit should assess the implementation not only of the Millennium Goals, but also of the goals of all the major United Nations conferences.

But the success of that summit implies going further. It should at last boldly lay the foundation for a world in which inequalities between poor and rich countries can be filled in a sustainable way. It should nourish, in an irreversible way, the indispensable confidence the world needs to be safer, more human and more brotherly.

Address by Mr. José María Aznar, President of the Government of the Kingdom of Spain

The Acting President: The Assembly will hear an address by the President of the Government of the Kingdom of Spain.

Mr. José María Aznar, President of the Government of the Kingdom of Spain, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. José María Aznar, President of the Government of the Kingdom of Spain, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Aznar (Spain) (spoke in Spanish): It is always a special opportunity for the leader of his country to speak to this General Assembly. My speech will be brief and may be summed up at the very outset in very few words as follows: I am speaking to you as the President of a European democratic country involved in sustainable development. My compatriots especially value the existence of freedom and respect for the law as factors for progress in Spain. We think these two values, freedom in all areas of life and compliance with the law comprise the best recipe for progress among peoples.

The last twenty-five years of progress in my country have fortunately coincided with the change in the millennium. Freedom of opinion, peaceful political choice and the broadening of fundamental rights have become values which enhance us. Of course, this has not been accomplished without effort and risks along the way. However, I now have the satisfaction of speaking of that progress. The culture of community upon which this democracy is based is openly expressed by the Spanish people of the Iberian Peninsula and we are celebrating this during the commemoration of the twenty-fifth anniversary of our Constitution. We are an open country, trusted throughout the world, and we wish the same principles and situation for others. The determination to increase freedom throughout the world and the concern to ensure that laws of the international community are complied with are values that guide our international policies. We share this position with many countries present here.

The world would be a better place if the rules we make for ourselves are complied with and if those who breach them know that their non-compliance will not prevail. The United Nations embodies international

legality. Compliance with its resolutions is in the interest of all. This is the best way to build a world in keeping with law rather than tyranny, with freedom rather than oppression.

It is probably for this purpose that the Security Council and the Organization require reform. Without doubt, this is a complex issue and we support efforts being made in this connection by the Secretary-General. In any case, we bear in mind that increasing the number of Security Council Members will not necessarily increase the effectiveness of the Council. But above all, the United Nations needs its own Members to respect its resolutions. A resolute effort on the part of all countries is necessary to ensure a more secure, yet freer world.

Although violations of Security Council resolutions exist, all of us must ensure that the resolutions are complied with. All of us must lend a hand because it is in the interest of all for the ideals of the United Nations to become a reality. Thus, we are committed to security, stability and the reconstruction of Iraq. We also are committed to returning sovereignty to the Iraqi people. We spare no effort and do not wish to dwell on the past. We believe that successful results in Iraq will be due to the efforts of the entire international community. We think that the pledging conference to be held in Spain on 23 and 24 October will be a big stride. I would like, from this rostrum, to invite all of you to participate in that conference.

Allow me to present some more concrete ideas. Our efforts must be directed towards restoring the sovereignty of the Iraqi people in a way which will enable them to freely enjoy their own resources. For that purpose there should be an agreement reached to establish a multinational force with the clear mandate of guaranteeing peace and security. Given the situation today in Iraq with its high risk of terrorism, this task cannot be entrusted to a mere interposed force, but rather to one that will specifically ensure peace, security and stability.

An additional agreement on the civil administration of Iraqi resources and public services for the people would be easier to obtain after that. I am referring to a civil administration directed by the United Nations with the participation of the new leaders who would be representing a peaceful and pluralistic Iraq.

Peace, security and freedom have always had enemies and we cannot close our eyes where such threats exist. We have been the victims of blind terrorist violence in this Organization. We cannot forget that vile and cowardly attack in Iraq by which terrorists hoped to expel the United Nations from Iraq and close it off from the world. The States who flout international law are threatening what is dearest to us, our lives and our freedom.

Proliferation of weapons of mass destruction would be even more dangerous. I firmly believe that commitment and true cooperation between all States will make it possible to win victory over terror. Last May, Members of the Security Council shared some considerations concerning the fight against terrorism to which I refer now. We will continue to work on preparing a list of terrorist organizations — things should be called by their proper names — and there should be no political or moral quarter given to assassins. Our priorities must be set. We will shut down the sources of financial support to terrorists and will prevent their access to weapons of mass destruction. The treaties on disarmament with regard to nuclear, chemical and biological weapons will help with this task. To prevent and intercept the trafficking of weapons of mass destruction, a group of countries has implemented the Proliferation Security Initiative whose first meeting took place in Madrid last June. I invite you also to join that Initiative.

We would like to give a voice to the victims of terrorism and for this, three things are required. We must restore truth, regain dignity and pay tribute to the victims of terrorism. If terrorists have sometimes used public tribunals, it is a moral necessity to give an institutional forum to the victims where they can be heard. We must unmask the terrorists and truly listen to the victims.

It has been rightly said, Sir, that the United Nations has not been established to create paradise in the world, but rather to keep the world from falling into an abyss. There is no paradise on earth. Efforts are being made to ensure that the world will be freer and more peaceful and to distance us from the abyss, efforts which make it possible for this Organization to make its lofty ideas a reality. It is hoped that no effort will be spared in this undertaking.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the

Government of the Kingdom of Spain for the statement he has just made.

Mr. José María Aznar, President of the Government of the Kingdom of Spain, was escorted from the rostrum.

The Acting President: I now call on Her Excellency Mrs. Yoriko Kawaguchi, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan.

Ms. Kawaguchi (Japan): I would like to extend my heartfelt congratulations to Mr. Julian Robert Hunte, Foreign Minister of Saint Lucia, on his assumption of the office of President for the fifty-eighth session of the General Assembly. I would also like to commend Mr. Jan Kavan, former Deputy Prime Minister and former Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic, for his devoted efforts during his tenure as President of the fifty-seventh session of the General Assembly.

First of all, I would like to touch upon the terrible tragedy that occurred last month. Special Representative of the Secretary-General Mr. Sergio Vieira de Mello and other United Nations staff, working diligently to facilitate the reconstruction and stabilization of Iraq, sacrificed their lives as a result of the cowardly bomb attack in Baghdad. On behalf of the Government of Japan, I take this opportunity to pay tribute to Mr. Vieira de Mello and his colleagues.

Much of our time and energy since the general debate last year have gone into the discussion of the Iraq situation. In that process, questions have been asked about the role of the Security Council and the United Nations with respect to the Organization's primary role of maintaining international peace and security. On the occasion of this general debate, we once again need to earnestly explore the meaning of this matter.

There is no organization on earth more universal than the United Nations. No other organization addresses so many diverse issues as comprehensively as it does. I strongly believe that the United Nations will continue to play an important role that no other international organization can fulfil. The United Nations role should be enhanced through reform in order to restore the confidence that was shaken in the Iraq situation. All Member States are called upon in our joint effort to strengthen the Organization.

Today, we face a situation in which the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and the threat of terrorism affect not only particular countries or regions but the world as a whole, presenting a new threat to our lives and our livelihood. It is imperative for each country to regard the issue as its own and to take action in concert with the countries facing such imminent threats.

In order to establish an Iraqi Government run by the Iraqis themselves as soon as possible, the international community must join hands for securing peace and promoting reconstruction, and the United Nations must play an even more prominent role in those efforts. Japan strongly expects that a new Security Council resolution will be adopted, that the path towards Iraqi self-governance will be clarified and that the international partnership will be strengthened to promote reconstruction and security. Together with the international community, Japan continues to make every effort towards the restoration of security and the reconstruction of Iraq and in particular towards the successful conclusion of the Madrid donors conference for the reconstruction of Iraq to be held next month.

With respect to peace in the Middle East, I am deeply concerned that the road map has reached a critical stage. I call upon both sides to exercise the utmost restraint in order to restore calm on the ground. The Palestinian Authority must resolutely disavow the use of terror, work expeditiously to establish a new cabinet and take action to control the extremist factions. Israel, in turn, must act with prudence and caution, mindful of the consequences of its own actions. In particular, the expulsion of Chairman Yasser Arafat can only result in a deterioration of the situation. Japan once again urges Israel not to proceed with the implementation of measures which would result in Chairman Arafat's removal.

From the perspectives of peace and security in North-East Asia and international non-proliferation, the development and possession of nuclear weapons by North Korea must never be tolerated. Japan once again urges North Korea to immediately and completely dismantle all of its nuclear development programmes in a verifiable and irreversible manner. This issue should be resolved peacefully by diplomatic efforts including the six-party talks process. Based on the Pyongyang Declaration between Japan and North Korea, Japan seeks the resolution of various outstanding issues between Japan and North Korea, including the nuclear

issue, the missile issue and the abduction issue, which was addressed explicitly by the Assembly last December in its resolution on the question of enforced or involuntary disappearances (57/215). Upon the comprehensive resolution of those issues, Japan is looking to effect the normalization of its diplomatic relations with North Korea.

With regard to Iran, Japan calls upon Iran to take seriously the resolution adopted at the 12 September meeting of the Board of Governors of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). Iran must appease the concerns of the international community regarding the nuclear issue. It must comply immediately with all measures prescribed in the resolution, which include cooperating fully with IAEA to rectify problem points by the end of October of this year. Iran must also ratify the IAEA Additional Protocol immediately and unconditionally and implement it in its entirety.

The very urgency of those issues reminds us of the importance of the crossroads at which we now stand with respect to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty regime. The horror and devastation caused by nuclear weapons should not be repeated. Japan is redoubling its efforts to maintain and fortify the nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime, with this treaty as its core. At the fifty-eighth session of the General Assembly, Japan will submit a draft resolution entitled "Path to the total elimination of nuclear weapons" and aim to secure adoption of the resolution by an overwhelming majority of Member States. Furthermore, Japan considers the early entry-into-force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty to be of extreme importance as a concrete means of strengthening the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty regime.

Despite the serious efforts of the international community to combat terrorism in the wake of the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001, precious lives continue to be lost by terrorist attacks in Jakarta, Baghdad and many other locations around the globe. Insofar as improvements in the terrorism-related response capabilities of all nations are required for the eradication of international terrorist organizations, Japan continues to provide capacity-building assistance to developing countries, with special emphasis on Asian countries. In addition, Japan calls upon all Member States to work to bring about the early conclusion of the counter-terrorism conventions as well as the implementation of Security Council resolution

1373 (2001) in order to deprive terrorists of the means for their activities and safe havens.

In the twenty-first century, we cannot address the dangers and threats now confronting the world with military and political measures alone.

Our responses must be well thought out, detailed and sustained, addressing every facet of the issues we face, including the social aspect, humanitarian and human rights concerns, and the question of economic reconstruction. Furthermore, we must strive to guarantee human rights, democracy and good governance by creating a social environment that enables each and every human being to realize his or her maximum potential.

On the basis of this realization, Japan has made the consolidation of peace and nation-building one of the pillars of its diplomacy and its international cooperation efforts, and it is contributing actively in a variety of areas, including peacekeeping operations. Moreover, in the conceptual framework of human security, Japan has made efforts to enhance both protection and capacity at the individual, human level. Japan will continue to work for the realization of the recommendations made in the report submitted by the Commission on Human Security in cooperation with the United Nations, Member States and non-governmental organizations, through diplomatic measures such as official development assistance.

Specific examples of Japan's efforts include assistance in nation-building, such as the deployment of Japan's Self-Defence Forces in Timor-Leste; the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme it is now implementing jointly with the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan; and support for the peace process and for reconstruction and development in the form of efforts such as the Tokyo Conference on Reconstruction and Development of Sri Lanka.

Measures against infectious diseases are also crucial in ensuring human security. The example of SARS demonstrated to the world yet again the importance of international cooperation in the mitigation of such diseases. Japan welcomes the results of yesterday's General Assembly High-level Meeting on HIV/AIDS, which reconfirmed both the commitment of every nation to the goals set forth in the Political Declaration and the importance of the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria.

With regard to Africa, Japan has been cooperating for its development on the basis of the principles of ownership and partnership, aiming at poverty eradication through economic growth, as well as providing assistance in conflict prevention in order to secure the peace and political stability which are prerequisites to development. The Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD) process is now in its 10th year. TICAD III will convene on 29 September. In response to the ownership of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), TICAD III intends to expand partnerships with international organizations and the countries concerned, and particularly with civil society and Asian countries which have successfully realized development, in order to share the wisdom and experiences of the international community in the area of African development.

As the representative of an Asian country, I would like to take this opportunity to highlight two issues that relate to peace and security in the Asian region.

The first is the detention of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi by the Government of Myanmar. Japan is continuing to make serious diplomatic efforts to bring about the expeditious resolution of this worrisome situation and to facilitate concrete progress towards national reconciliation and democratization.

The second issue concerns the Khmer Rouge trials in Cambodia. Japan believes that it is necessary for each country to extend considerable cooperation in order to ensure that these trials take place and that they exhibit an unswerving application of the principles of law and justice of the international community.

In the community of nations, diversity is both respected and cherished. For that reason, the formulation of a set of common rules under which the entire global community can act as one is of extreme importance. The United Nations has made significant progress in this area to date. I would like to explain some of the agenda items which Japan will be pursuing at the United Nations, here in the General Assembly and elsewhere, in order to formulate such rules. Such rules will constitute the basis for well-thought-out, detailed and sustained responses to a broad spectrum of issues, including socio-economic, environmental and human rights issues.

In the field of the environment, it is imperative that the international momentum for climate change negotiations be maintained. I appeal to the representatives of all nations who are gathered here to recognize the importance of the early entry into force of the Kyoto Protocol and of the formulation of common rules which will facilitate participation by all countries, including the United States of America and developing countries.

The protection and promotion of the rights of disabled persons is also of great importance. Japan welcomes the decision taken in June of this year to establish a working committee which will draft an international convention on the promotion and protection of the rights of persons with disabilities; Japan will actively participate in this process.

With regard to the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development, Japan looks forward to the adoption of a resolution promoting the creation of an implementation plan in which the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) serves as the lead agency.

Disaster prevention is an indispensable element for a safer world in the twenty-first century, not merely because of its role in the follow-up to the World Summit on Sustainable Development, but also as an essential prerequisite for achieving much of the sustainable development agenda. Japan proposes to host the World Conference on Natural Disaster Reduction in order to develop new strategies on disaster prevention.

For the United Nations to fulfil the role of bringing about a world of peace and prosperity based on common rules embraced by the entire international community, the reform of the United Nations, particularly that of the Security Council, as its core, must be urgently addressed.

Today's conflicts have become more diversified and increasingly complex, as evidenced in cases where a civil war escalates due to the dysfunctional condition of a State. To respond to these new challenges, the Security Council has taken on new tasks, such as the deployment of multinational forces, when necessary, to restore order. Such tasks also include the expansion of the role of peacekeeping activities from military and police activities such as ceasefire monitoring to humanitarian activities, including assistance for repatriation of refugees, as well as assistance for

democratic elections and reconstruction efforts. The Security Council must take on a variety of these tasks in working for the resolution of today's conflicts.

For the Security Council to address these challenges comprehensively, there is a need to strengthen the functioning of the Council by including countries that are both willing and able to shoulder responsibilities at the global level as permanent members. Japan continues to work diligently for the realization of Security Council reform and would like to assume greater responsibility as a permanent member in a reformed Council.

The issues about which I am speaking today are hardly new. Discussions on the reform of the Security Council have been under way for 10 years now. Yet, despite a series of exhaustive discussions about how the Council should be reformed, we are still unable to see progress in any concrete terms.

It is no exaggeration to say that, if we continue along this path, the ability of the United Nations to respond adequately to new and complex challenges will be seriously brought into question. We must take concrete action now. The Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, makes a strong case for United Nations reform in his report (A/58/323) entitled, "Implementation of the United Nations Millennium Declaration". He proposes that we set 2005 as a deadline for reaching agreement on the changes that are needed in our international institutions if we are to meet the new challenges, because 2005 not only marks the sixtieth anniversary of the founding of the United Nations but is also the year in which a review of progress on the Millennium Declaration will take place. I am of the view that a political decision should be taken on the occasion of that review at a meeting of heads of State or Government regarding the reform of the United Nations, in particular the Security Council.

With regard to the "enemy State" clauses in the United Nations Charter, a General Assembly resolution was adopted in 1995, recognizing them to be obsolete. Those clauses have not yet, however, been deleted from the Charter. This is an extremely regrettable situation. Japan will work to find appropriate solutions to this issue, in view of the progress on United Nations reform.

Administrative and budgetary reform of the United Nations is also necessary in order to increase both its effectiveness and its efficiency. With regard to

the size of the United Nations budget, it is necessary to give careful consideration to the financial burden on Member States. Japan calls on the United Nations both to conduct a strict prioritization of its activities and to eliminate those activities which are neither essential nor urgent. We must also consider appropriate methods to make the scale of assessments for all Member States more balanced. Finally, equitable geographical distribution among Member States for the number of staff members of the Secretariat has yet to be attained. The present situation is of concern and needs to be improved.

Japan believes that international peace and prosperity can be achieved only through cooperation among nations, with the United Nations playing an important role. Japan has used all means at its disposal to contribute to United Nations activities, so that the

objectives contained in the United Nations Charter may ultimately be realized. Let me make it clear that Japan will continue to be actively engaged in United Nations activities. However, the perpetuation of the same basic Security Council structure of 60 years ago leads many to question the legitimacy of the system under which the United Nations operates. The legitimacy of the United Nations is at stake.

In closing, I would like once again to urge all Member States to take concrete actions to strengthen the functions of this Organization and restore its legitimacy in the eyes of the nations and citizens of the world.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in the debate for this meeting.

The meeting rose at 7.25 p.m.